
NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS

Newsletter of the NYC Chapter of the House Rabbit Society

Spring 2001



How Acupuncture Helped Howie Hop

Sara Busch, DVM, CVA
Brighton, MA

Editor's note: Dr. Busch, pictured above with Howie, was a guest speaker at our RRR/HRS rabbit-care conference in May, 2000, where she presented Howie's case.

When I first met Howie, a seven-year-old English Angora bunny, his owners were considering euthanizing him. In December of 1999 Howie had progressively lost the use of both of his rear legs. Over the month of December he also lost the use of his left front leg. He was completely unable to "right" himself from side to side, much less walk or hop. Even when he was held upright, his left front leg would "knuckle" over and drag underneath him, and both rear legs would flop like limp rags. No known trauma or accident had precipitated his condition. When I first examined Howie he was extremely thin (5.5 lbs.). He had lost all of the muscle mass that usually covers the length *(continued on page 2)*

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From Butcher to Brooklyn: Lance's New Life

Iris Farrand

Editor's note: Iris Farrand adopted Lance, who was rescued from a Manhattan meat market, from RRR/HRS in May 1999.

Wake up time for my sons used to be difficult before we adopted Lance, a wonderful, big albino boy. Now Lance does my work for me. He jumps up on each bed, digs at the comforter until it is off, nudges the sleeper, then plops down next to him for some nose rubs and back scratches. What a wonderful way to wake up!

Lance gets along beautifully with my other fur and feather babies. Before Lance figured out how to open doors that were closed, my male cat would act as his partner in crime. He would open doors that were closed and would also knock food off the table, to the floor, for him to catch. Lance has now figured out that if he jumps up on the chair he can then get onto the table all by himself. They still do the bunny 500 together and my cat has learned how to "binky." *(continued on page 2)*

Rabbit Rescue & Rehab Receives Full Chapter Status from HRS

After granting RRR provisional chapter status last year, the House Rabbit Society voted this spring to grant RRR full chapter status as the NYC-metro chapter of the HRS. In this capacity, RRR continues to serve all five NYC boroughs, as well as Long Island and the tri-state commuter areas of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Contacts for the NYC-metro chapter are:

Mary Cotter (Chapter Manager): 914-337-6146

Cindy Stutts (Educator): 212-831-7107

Jennifer Stenzel (Educator): 718-596-0326

Mary Ann Maier (Long Island liaison): 516-671-6654

Become a Supporting Member!

You can become a member of the NYC-metro HRS by filling out the form in this newsletter (p. 7) and mailing it back, along with your check.

Your membership (and any additional donation you can afford to make) helps to support our rescue and education efforts, as well as our foster rabbits.

(**Howie** from pg.1)

of the spine and powers the rear legs. He had bed sores over both rear legs and had practically no wool from his hips down to his toes. He preferred to lie on his right side and as a result his bed sores were worse on that side. He was somewhat distressed when placed on his left side. The skin along his inner thighs was very red and inflamed from urine scald. Veterinarians had x-rayed Howie's spine and found narrowed disc spaces. His owners were directed to give him steroids daily, and to restrict his movement by confining him to a small area, so he would be less likely to further injure his back. But after 7 weeks of confinement and daily steroids, Howie was not improving. In fact, his owners noticed he was deteriorating.

Traditional Western Diagnosis and Treatment

Howie's Western medical diagnosis was "intervertebral disc disease." Discs (made of cartilage) normally cushion the bones in the spine (the vertebrae), and give the back flexibility. But when discs are compressed or "pinched," they can protrude onto the spinal cord and pinch the spinal nerves. All of this likely contributed to Howie's inability to move and hop.

The Western medical approach to intervertebral disc disease usually starts with restricting activity and prescribing steroids. His owners kept him wrapped in a diaper in a dog-bed basket. There wasn't much need to confine him more than that, since he could not move even if he had wanted to. Steroids are often prescribed to decrease inflammation and the pain accompanying it. However, there are unwanted side effects associated with long term steroid use in any animal, and steroid use in rabbits is generally discouraged. Aware of this, his owners were reluctant to keep him on steroids indefinitely.

Although custom-made pet carts are useful for some animals with disc problems, Howie was not a good candidate for a cart, since only one of his front legs was functional. Disc surgery, which might be appropriate for some species with disc disease, is not generally an option for rabbits, primarily because of difficulties created by their muscle-to-bone ratio. Most veterinary medical textbooks recommend euthanizing rabbits that have injured their backs because of their poor prognosis to regain the use of their legs. When Howie's owners asked about euthanasia in January 2000, I suggested we try acupuncture. After all, at this point, what did we have to lose?

Veterinary Acupuncture

Veterinary acupuncture has been practiced for over 2000 years in China and its use in the United States is rapidly growing. There are hundreds of veterinarians across the country using acupuncture

to treat dogs, cats, and horses for a variety of diseases and disorders. However, there are only a few veterinarians using it to help other animal species. As Howie's case shows, acupuncture has the potential to be tremendously beneficial for rabbits, too.

By definition, acupuncture is the insertion of solid, metal needles into specific points (acupuncture points) on the body in order to balance the body's Chi or "Vital Energy" to restore health. In Howie's case, it helped him regain the use of his severely paretic (practically paralyzed) legs. *(continued on page 4)*

(**Lance** from pg.1)

My female cat, although she is spayed, will occasionally succumb to Lance's charms and hump him, and he graciously lets her. Many times you will find both cats hanging out with Lance in his cage. He also gives my cockateil piggyback rides.

Like many bunnies, Lance is not a kisser. He will occasionally lick my clothes, but not me. Even when he is eating food from my mouth he just gently takes it but gives no kisses in return. So what is a desperate bunny-mom to do? What else?! One day, I mashed up a banana and rubbed it into my face. It worked! I got kisses (even though they were extorted).

Perhaps the most wonderful thing about Lance is the joy he takes in social interaction. When my husband Marc passed away, we observed Shiva (the official, weeklong Jewish mourning period) at my home. Lance helped us deal with our grief, and made an unbearable time so much easier.

Remarkably, Lance acted as a host, greeting those who came to console us. He took turns sitting next to each visitor on the couch, and was also of great comfort to my three sons and me.

Thanks to Lance, the sadness and solemnity of the time was often relieved with laughter. His sense of smell, as always, was beyond compare, which he demonstrated over and over again. When those paying condolences brought cakes or candy, Lance's radar went to work. He knew his mission: seek and devour. Mourners watched me struggle with Lance as I tried to reclaim the box of candy he had grabbed out of someone's hand and was busily working on opening. Everyone was so amazed that a bunny could be as sociable as Lance, and perhaps some who met him will one day open their hearts and homes to a shelter bunny because of him.

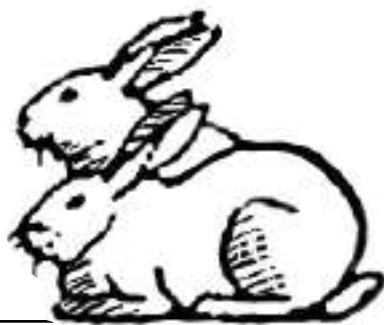
So many people comment that I have a big heart to adopt all my fur and feather babies. It is actually the other way around. They give me far more than I can ever give them. As white as the contrast of Lance is against the night sky, so too is his love on my darkest days.



Bachelor Number Three:

Floppy Finds a Partner for a New Leap on Life

Abby Wolf



When we lost our dear Mokie last June, our hearts were broken, and we weren't sure how soon – if ever – we could even contemplate adopting a new bunny friend for Mokie's beloved companion, Floppy. At first, we thought Floppy was handling Mokie's passing far better than we were. But then she began to mope. She picked at her food and hay, and lost interest in her favorite games of Bunch-the-Towel and Cardboard Playhouse Deconstruction. Something had to be done.

So, after a respectable period of mourning, we brought Floppy to the NYC-metro House Rabbit Society chapter where she could meet some potential companions.

First came a little grey guy – handsome, but most ungentlemanly. He ran right over to Floppy and began humping her without even introducing himself – and then he hopped away. Hmmf; love 'em and leave 'em. He would not do. Next came a fluffy white boy who, although quite attractive himself, hadn't the slightest interest in our beautiful girl. He ran right past her, down the hall to another area as if she did not exist. Good thing Floppy has a healthy sense of self-esteem! Score so far: 0-2.

A sassy little girl-bunny followed, but she promptly began to smack Floppy's face. By this time, we were wondering if we'd ever find the right companion for our mellow girl.


But then came Bachelor Number Three: Timmy Tilford, a striking agouti fellow who had all the right moves. He ambled over to Floppy, casual and confident, kissed her face, and then stretched out attentively by her side. Clearly, this was a guy who knew how to court a girl! Timmy continued to cuddle with Floppy in the hall, to the delight of all onlookers. This was a match meant to be.

We packed up the two lovebirds, complete with Timmy's toys as a "dowry," and headed over the river for home

As instructed, we took the two buns out each day for brief periods of supervised "together-time" in a neutral part of the house. For the first few days, there was a fair amount of humping (they took turns), and occasional hair pulling. Gradually, though, the bunnies would lie side by side, and we would pet them both, murmuring words of encouragement.

Near the end of the first week, we shifted playtime from the hallway to the kitchen – which, after all, is where they would eventually be living. The two of them surprised us by jumping into – and using – each other's litterboxes. Soon after this, Timmy made his move. He followed Floppy into her condo, and, to our astonishment, she did not object! The entire courtship and bonding period was gentle and peaceful, and lasted a remarkably short week (this can vary quite a bit, depending on the personality of the bunnies; some take many weeks).

Since then, Floppy and Timmy have been inseparable. They kiss and groom each other throughout the day, and often spend the afternoons cuddling side by side, occasionally moving to change positions, but never losing contact with one other. They eat together from the same dish, and love running and binkying around the dining room together. Oftentimes they are so in tune with each other that each grooms the same parts of his/her body at the same time as the other.

Although we still miss Mokie and will never forget her, we are slowly healing, thanks in large part to Timmy and the tremendous amount of love he and Floppy show each other. I do believe what is often said about our beloved companion critters: sometimes, one of them must leave in order to make room in our homes and hearts for another creature that is in desperate need of someone to love. 

New Nail-Cutting Video Available!



If you have trouble cutting your rabbit's nails, now you can get some help. This 38-minute video will show you a technique that's gentle, and non-traumatic for both you and your bunny. It is simple and straightforward, and does not involve trancing or any special restraining equipment (such as bags, bunny burritos, etc.)

To order, make out your check to "Rabbit Rescue & Rehab," and mail it to:

Rabbit Rescue and Rehab
56 West Pondfield Rd. - 5C
Bronxville, NY 10708

The video is \$20, and postage is \$3.50 (total \$23.50). Please write "nail video" somewhere on your check. Your video will be shipped as soon as your check is received.

(Howie from pg.2)

Acupuncture is only one of the healing modalities utilized by practitioners of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (TCVM). The other therapeutic modalities include herbal/nutritional medicine and bodily manipulation (chiropractics, massage and rehabilitative therapies).

TCVM Diagnosis

From the perspective of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medical (TCVM), Howie had a "Kidney Yang Imbalance." In TCVM, the Kidney Organ Network is related to the season of winter and maintaining the strength of bone. It is not a coincidence from a TCVM perspective that Howie's condition became clinically noticeable in the winter and was a disease affecting the bones of his spine.

TCVM Treatment


I decided to incorporate elements from all three TCVM therapeutic modalities into Howie's treatment plan. I reviewed his diet and recommended increasing his timothy hay and rabbit pellets. Once we discovered that he wasn't eating his cecal pellets (because he was always wrapped in the diaper, and couldn't move to get to them on his own), his owners "harvested" them, and fed them to him. I also started him on a nutraceutical supplement, a combination of glucosamine and chondroitin, to help protect the cartilage in the discs along his spine. Then I showed his owners how to provide nursing care for his bedsores. Between acupuncture sessions his owners massaged the muscles along his spine and down the length of his rear legs. They also started him on twice daily physical therapy sessions.

His first three acupuncture treatments were all 24 hours apart and consisted of "dry needling" points that would strengthen Kidney Yang, work locally at the spinal junctions where the disc spaces were narrowed and distally at "Ting points" down on his toes, and on the tip of his tail. After his third treatment we started weekly sessions and added a technique called pneumoacupuncture for his muscle loss. We started tapering his steroids and discontinued them completely over a six week period.

Results of Howie's TCVM Treatment

Slowly, but surely, Howie's bed sores healed, his wool started to grow back on his legs and his left front leg became completely functional again. Even more slowly, but surely, he gained strength in both of his rear legs. After eleven treatments, Howie had a big breakthrough: on March 29, 2000, he started hopping again!

Although his recovery was not complete, nevertheless Howie's response to acupuncture was nothing short of incredible. Granted,

this was a single successful case. It does not necessarily mean that every rabbit with an injured back will respond similarly. However, I do think Howie's response suggests that acupuncture is worth trying, especially when the only other option is euthanasia. 

Editor's note: Howie enjoyed four additional happy, hopping months with his owners, and died of unrelated causes in July, 2000, in his eighth year.

For further reading:

Four Paws, Five Directions: A Guide to Chinese Medicine for Cats and Dogs, by Cheryl Schwartz, DVM, ISBN: 0-89087-790-4

Between Heaven and Earth: A Guide to Chinese Medicine, by Harriet Beinfield, L. Ac. ISBN: 0-345-37974-8

For a list of veterinary acupuncturists contact:

- American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association: (410) 569-0795
- Chi-Institute of Chinese Medicine for Veterinarians: (352) 591-3165
- www.AltVetMed.com
- www.ivas.org

I would also like to thank the following for their help with Howie's progress:

- Bruce Ferguson, DVM, Micanopy, Florida (TCVM diagnosis)
- Mary Cotter, EdD, Bronxville, NY (nutrition)
- Jennifer Saver, DVM, Kew Gardens, NY (nursing care)
- Nancy O'Leary, DVM, Worcester, MA (acupuncture point selection and nutraceutical supplementation suggestions)
- His owners, whose devotion never diminished. They kept going long after so many would have given up.



Chapter News & Notes

since our last Newsletter...

...Rabbit Rescue & Rehab produced an educational video on nail-cutting and handling (see p. 3). Special thanks to Laura George (HRS educator) and Jennifer Saver, DVM for their "behind-the-scenes" production help.

...Mary Cotter (NYC-metro HRS chapter manager) co-authored an article with Dana Krempels (Miami HRS chapter manager) and Gil Stanzione, DVM. The article, entitled "Ileus in Domestic Rabbits" was published in vol. 2.4 (Aug./Sept. 2000) issue of *Exotic DVM*. The article is also accessible through our web site: www.hindfeet.com/nychrs

...Amy Odum and Jeanine Callace (Board members, RRR), along with Ted Valand, organized an educational table at the annual "Puttin' on the Dog" festival in Greenwich, Conn. Special thanks to Catrin Frolich (Connecticut volunteer) for including HRS among the non-profit organizations offered booth space at this event.

...Mary Cotter gave a live demonstration of clinical handling techniques at the International Conference on Exotics in May, 2000. Mary and Dana Krempels helped man the HRS booth organized and set up by Dana Hakes (Tampa Bay HRS educator) at the ICE event.

...Cindy Stutts (HRS educator) organized and manned a "bunny booth" at the annual YMCA street fair in Manhattan, with the help of Mary Ann Maier (LI liaison).

...Mary Ann Maier and Mary Cotter attended the North American Veterinary Conference in January, 2001 (along with Robin Rysavy, Kansas City HRS chapter manager) to help Dana Hakes run the HRS booth she organized for the event. Our chapter's nail-cutting/handling video was presented to an audience of veterinarians at this conference.

...Long Island *Newsday* featured a pre-Easter (3-27-2001) profile of Mary Ann Maier and her 3 rescued rabbits, focusing on how to live with an indoor rabbit, and explaining the annual problem of post-Easter dumps.

...The ASPCA published a cover story on rabbits ("Rabbits Revisited"), written and photographed by Mary Cotter, in the spring 2001 issue of its quarterly publication *Animal Watch*. The story is an overview of life with house rabbits, and includes basic care information and sources for learning more.

Veterinary News & Notes

- Becky Campbell, DVM, opened her new practice on Manhattan's Upper West Side.
- Jennifer Saver, DVM, opened her new practice in New Hyde Park, L.I.
- Gil Stanzione, DVM, bought (and is renovating) a building for his own practice in White Plains, N.Y.



Recommended Veterinarians in the NYC-Metro Area

The following is our current list of recommended veterinarians in the NY-metropolitan area. Some have years of experience, while others are relatively new to rabbit medicine. Although their background and experience varies, all have a keen interest in rabbit medicine and a desire to work with House Rabbit Society clients.

Please note that our recommendations refer to specific veterinarians only—not to entire practices or clinics. We recommend only practitioners we know personally. For more information on any practitioner in this list (or to suggest a rabbit-savvy vet for our "recommended" list), please contact Mary Cotter: mec@cloud9.net, or 914-337-6146.

It's wise to get to know your rabbit's vet before you are faced with an emergency. Take your bunny in for a "well-bunny checkup" when you have the time. Ask your vet to show you how to clip nails, check ears, clean scent glands. You and your bunny will both feel better!

NYC:

Becky Campbell, DVM — 212-866-8000

Symphony Veterinary Clinic

Lauren Stein, VMD -- 212-712-9600

Animal General (67th St. Branch)

LONG ISLAND:

Jennifer Saver, DVM — 516- 877-7080

New Hyde Park: Catnip & Carrots Veterinary Hospital

Heidi Hoefler, DVM — 516-351-6116

Huntington: West Hills Animal Hospital

Brian Rose, DVM & Jeff Rose, DVM —

516-473-0415, Port Jefferson Station

WESTCHESTER:

John Pisciotta, DVM — 914-921-2000

Rye-Harrison Veterinary Clinic

Gil Stanzione, DVM — 914-421-0020, White Plains

This list is updated regularly on our web page. If you cannot access www.hindfeet.com directly, go to www.rabbit.org and locate link to "NYC Chapter."

Human Companions Wanted!



Spice and Anthony are a bonded pair of big red bunnies that will bring some color into your living room! Spice is dark auburn, and Anthony is the color of pumpkin pie. They are deeply in love and do everything together. Anthony is outgoing and a "people person," while Spice is more reserved and prefers to hang back and watch Anthony in action. Each weighs around 7-8lbs.

Sarah is a beautiful agouti (color of a wild rabbit) lop bunny - spayed, and getting used to being handled kindly (probably for the first time in her life!) Sarah *loves* to dig and shred! She wants a home where she can have her very own box filled with newspaper and hay, where she can dig to her heart's content! This is a bright bunny who needs projects to keep her happy!



Jackie is an almost-dwarf girl, completely black except for the tip of her nose (like a beacon in the night!) and one white-gloved paw. She is **terrified** of hands coming toward her, and will grunt and box to tell you about her fear. But once you pick her up, she snuggles right down into your arms. Jackie needs a special human who will understand her reactions, and shower her with love in spite of them.

Martha is a beautiful, calm senior citizen (around 6-7 years old, spayed) who is looking for a retirement home with the following benefits: a kind, caring human for company and head rubs, a peaceful environment without the small children who tormented her when she was young, some music to listen to from time to time, a warm lap to snuggle into, a place for strolls and exercise. She is particular in her likes and dislikes, yet undemanding and very easy to live with.



Lewis (black & white spotted) and **Jessica** (brown & white spotted) are a Dynamic Duo. Lewis is outgoing, curious, and affectionate, while Jessi is more cautious and prefers to look before she leaps. Jessi regards Lewis as her Fearless Leader, and copies most of what he does. They are looking for humans who are willing to let them be themselves, and love them for who they are.

Joy is a spayed, spotted (brown and white) Rex. This little girl came in with an attitude, but now she has settled down and decided that humans are acceptable, and some are even lovable! Joy is industrious, creative, and, once she knows you, *loves* to be held and caressed.



Ascot is a sleek, satiny, black dwarf-mix boy, with a whimsical wisp of a white ascot around his neck. He is friendly and outgoing, and considers it his job to warm your lap. Loves to be patted and have his head scratched. He is neutered and ready to go home.

**PLEASE SUPPORT OUR RESCUE WORK
BY BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY**

1) LOCAL MEMBERSHIP:

Membership in NYC HRS: \$18 per year—includes NYC Newsletter
Mail your check (*made out to Rabbit Rescue & Rehab*), along with form below, to:
Jeanine Callace, 25 Lake St., White Plains, NY

2) NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP:

Membership in national HRS: \$18 per year—includes House Rabbit Journal
Mail your check (*made out to House Rabbit Society*), along with form below, to:
Jeanine Callace, 25 Lake St., White Plains, NY

3) COMBINED MEMBERSHIP:

If you join national HRS and NYC HRS simultaneously, we will reduce your NYC membership cost to \$15. To join both, please send *two separate checks*, in one envelope as follows:

- One check made out to Rabbit Rescue & Rehab for \$15
- One check made out to House Rabbit Society for \$18

Mail *both checks in one envelope*, along with the following form, to:
Jeanine Callace, 25 Lake St., White Plains, NY, 10603.



NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE (HOME, WORK) _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Please check whichever applies:

_____ I am sending a single check (\$18) made out to "*Rabbit Rescue & Rehab*" for local membership.

_____ I am sending a single check (\$18) made out to "*House Rabbit Society*" for national membership.

_____ I am sending two checks, in one envelope, for combined membership: one (\$15) made out to "*Rabbit Rescue & Rehab*" and one (\$18) made out to "*House Rabbit Society*."

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Newsletter of RRR/NYC Chapter of the House Rabbit Society
56 West Pondfield Rd. – 5C
Bronxville, NY 10708

Editor: Mary E. Cotter (mec@cloud9.net)

Technical Support: Amy Odum, Mary Ann Maier

Rabbit Rescue & Rehab is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation in New York State. Our purpose is to rescue, rehabilitate, and find permanent homes for abandoned, abused, and neglected rabbits, and to educate members of the general public on rabbit care through publications, telephone consultations, home visits, and public presentations.

This Newsletter is published by RRR/NYC Chapter of the House Rabbit Society, which is solely responsible for its content. Letters, photographs, and other submissions to the Newsletter become the property of the NYC Chapter and cannot be returned. We retain the right to edit submissions for publications.

? What if my rabbit has an emergency and my vet's office is closed?

We have received several very disturbing phone calls over this past year, from members who have taken their rabbits to after-hours emergency clinics, where the veterinarians in attendance were not knowledgeable or skilled in rabbit medicine.

If your veterinarian does not handle his/her own after-hours emergencies, and you cannot find another rabbit-savvy vet, please contact your nearest RRR/HRS representative for help in finding a vet who can treat your rabbit.

Do you know a vet who has the interest and/or skills to work with rabbits? Please let us know! RRR maintains a "recommended vet list" and we don't want to overlook any good rabbit vets in the NYC-metro area. Rabbit-savvy vets are especially needed in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.

DOUBLE (OR TRIPLE!) YOUR MONEY!

If you work for a company with a matching funds program, please consider donating to Rabbit Rescue & Rehab through that program, in order to increase the benefit of your donation.

Rabbit Rescue & Rehab is a not-for-profit corporation in N.Y. State. Donations to Rabbit Rescue & Rehab are tax-deductible.

YOUR DONATIONS ARE USED FOR:

- Spaying and neutering all rescued rabbits
- Providing veterinary care for needy rabbits
- Food (including fresh vegetables) for foster rabbits
- Hay for foster rabbits
- Supplies for foster rabbits (including, but not limited to: cages and cage supplies, puppy exercise pens, food and water bowls, commercial garbage bags, towels, toys, carrying cases, litterboxes, carpet strips, washable cotton rugs, synthetic sheepskin, pill crushers, feeding syringes, etc.)
- Prescription (and other) drugs and subcutaneous fluids for foster rabbits
- Payment of expenses incurred in creating and distributing educational materials

Hare ye! Hare ye!

6TH Annual RRR/HRS Rabbit-Care Conference

WHEN: SUNDAY, MAY 20, 2001, 10 a.m. 5 p.m.

WHERE: RAMADA PLAZA HOTEL, One Ramada Plaza, New Rochelle, NY

TO REGISTER: See flyer enclosed, or contact:

***Jeanine Callace (jcallace@chubb.com), Mary Cotter (mec@cloud9.net),
or Mary Ann Maier (altitude8@yahoo.com)***

