

ANIMAL RIDDER

Continued from page 15



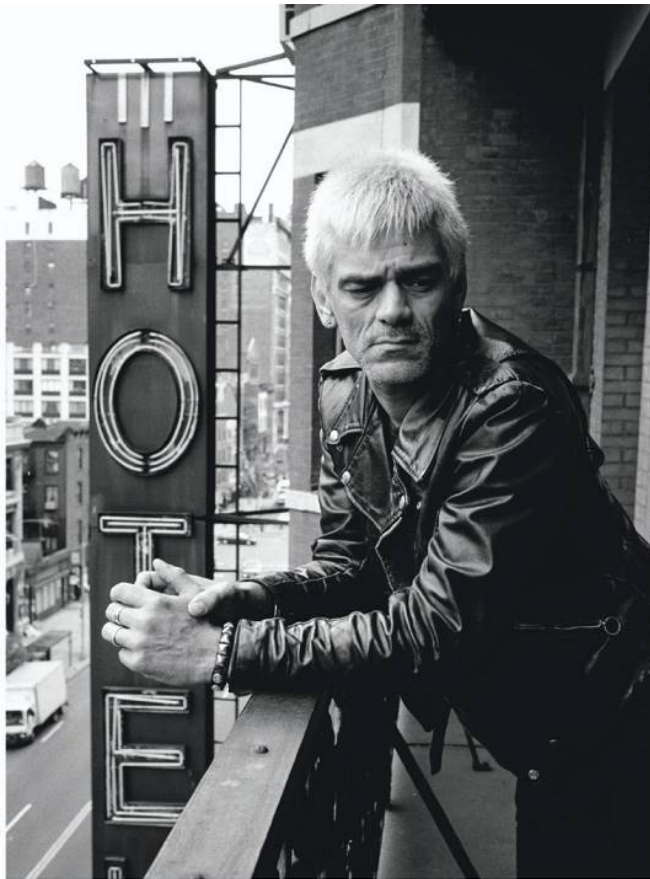
a tree, with a bucket roped around her waist, to capture crow eggs from nests her father had monitored with binoculars. “The mother and father crow would be dive-bombing you, and he’d say, ‘Now don’t hit a branch and drop the bucket!’” she recalls. “I guess he figured he could spare one of us kids.”

Because “there was nobody else doing it,” Animal Ridders seemed like a logical career choice. The goal was to help private homeowners and businesses with “nuisance wildlife management” — you know, a raccoon that has tumbled down a chimney or a mole that’s tunneled under a manicured lawn. For the first seven years, Darling did all the work solo. Since then, she has hired three full-time employees and two part-timers, who do the ladder or roofing jobs. “All my work keeps me on the ground,” Darling says. “I enjoy being outdoors and getting exercise. When I’m doing mole work, I walk around all day long. It’s better than sitting behind a desk.”

She runs the company out of her Lyndon home, setting up pickup truck routes in the morning, capturing critters during the day and — always for less than 24 hours — storing the caged animals in a shed near her house. The spring months are busiest, and it’s common during this time for the crew to bring in 100 animals — flying squirrels, opossums, groundhogs, chipmunks, beavers, coyotes, bats and plenty of others — weekly. Darling owns about 600 various traps and, when possible, releases the animals back to the wild.

After about two decades, Darling has plenty of stories, some of which she shares in a newsletter mailed to clients. There was the beaver lodge she fell through. And the raccoon that caused nearly \$10,000 in damages when it got trapped in a vacationing family’s home. And the man who scared his 12-foot-long pet Burmese python with a vacuum cleaner and needed Darling and her workers to come control it. She’s seen it all, though she still prefers to avoid some animals. “I wouldn’t want to do alligators,” she says, “nothing that could take me down.”

— Josh Moss



Chelsea Hotel resident and punk-rock icon Dee Dee Ramone, who died from a heroine overdose in 2002. Photo by Rita Barros ©

Chelsea Mourning

Manhattan’s Chelsea Hotel has served as muse, workplace and home for such luminaries as Mark Twain, Bob Dylan, Frida Kahlo, Joni Mitchell and Jack Kerouac. For the past 12 years it’s also been the residence of Louisville native Ed Hamilton, 47, who has kept himself busy accumulating and recounting tales of such indelible figures — famous, infamous and otherwise — in his new book *Legends of the Chelsea Hotel: Living With Artists and Outlaws in New York’s Rebel Mecca*. Hamilton also writes an ongoing blog about the fate of the hotel, which switched hands in June 2007 when majority owner and longtime manager Stanley Bard was ousted from his position by minority shareholders “alleging financial improprieties.” Management was taken over by BD Hotels, whose corporate influence, some believe, threatens to eradicate the essence of the bohemian oasis.

How did you first learn about the Chelsea Hotel?

“It played a part in the lives of so many great writers that it was always coming up in the books I read. But perhaps I first heard it mentioned in connection with Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground as the place where all the weirdos hung out in New York.”

What is your favorite aspect about living there?

“It’s got to be the creative energy and its sense of history — those two things are connected I believe. The greats of the past are with us (in the Chelsea) day-to-day. Their work is literally hanging from the walls and you couldn’t avoid them if you wanted to.”

What changes have been made since BD took over?

“They’ve done the worst thing possible, which is to refuse to allow any more permanent residents. In an artistic community such as this you need new blood to churn the pot. In terms of the atmosphere, it’s just not the same without Stanley.”

How do you expect things to change further?

“BD will most likely continue to force out tenants who are in weak positions. We also expect to see them get rid of storefront retail businesses such as the tattoo parlor and the acupuncturist. They will probably try to lure in a ‘big box’ store such as a bank that can pay higher rent.”

What’s become of Stanley Bard?

“Stanley is not allowed back into the hotel he owns without an escort. It breaks his heart and it’s a sad and humiliating end for someone who put his heart and soul into this unique institution.”

Tell us a little bit about your Louisville roots?

“I spent most of my childhood there, attending grade school at St. Margaret Mary and High School at Trinity — (the latter) a very depressing four years, due to the lack of girls. I came back to U of L (after obtaining a bachelor’s degree from UK) for graduate school, earning my master’s degree in philosophy.”

Is there anything you miss about Louisville?

“Louisville is a much more relaxed environment (than New York City). I miss the peace and quiet. The air is better in Louisville, too.”

— Ashley Dawson