THE SAN DIEGO ZOO AND BALBOA PARK

The San Diego Zoo occupies a special place in San Diego in terms of its local appeal and its non-local celebrity. To many it is the number one symbol of San Diego. It is the first topic someone who has heard of the City is likely to ask about. It would be pointless to claim it is the best Zoo in the United States or in the world. Nonetheless, it can be ranked as one of the world's best zoos with or without the Wild Animal Park that acts as a counterpart to the centrally-located Zoo. The Wild Animal Park is within the sprawling territory of San Diego though it is closer to downtown Escondido than to downtown San Diego. If a zoo is to be considered as a progressive, scientific and humane institution the Wild Animal Park is ahead of the San Diego Zoo, which is handicapped by a plan that grew out of a past when standards for the care of animals were perfunctory and love of animals was at a sentimental and unscientific level.(1) In 1916, J.C. Thompson, a surgeon in the U. S. Navy seriously proposed that school children should feed the animals in the upcoming San Diego Zoo the remains of their lunches!(2)

The Zoo existed in Balboa Park before the Panama-California Exposition of 1915. There were paddocks for animals and birds scattered about the park, in level land and in canyons. Visitations were not restricted as the animals were meant to be seen; however fences kept people from getting too close. Dogs were another matter. A domesticated Airedale massacred seven deer in the deer paddock at the Pepper Grove Picnic Grounds in 1923, leading to demands that the Board of Park Commissioners prevent the bringing of dogs into the park with and without leash.(3)

The Board of Park Commissioners was not prepared to assume custody of animals left over from the defunct Wonderland Park menagerie in Ocean Beach so Doctor Harry Wegeforth, who had been fired as a city health inspector,(4) stepped in. Wegeforth, described in the *San Diego Sun* as an "important hunter"(5) was a clever campaigner who had a talent for reaching the heartstrings and purse strings of San Diegans. He insisted that children should always be admitted free, claimed the Zoo's purpose was to entertain and to educate children and published results of straw polls of children on propositions relating to the Zoo a day or so before adults voted on the measures.(6)

The U.S. Navy aided and abetted the Zoo as ships coming into port usually had a supply of exotic animals from foreign lands they were eager to dispose of. Acting under orders from Colonel Joseph H. Pendleton, U. S. Marines stationed in Nicaragua scoured the countryside to find exotic animals, reptiles and birds to ship to the San Diego Zoo.(7)

The first plan in 1917 was to locate the Zoo in Pepper Grove and on the east slopes of Gold Gulch Canyon, where a small menagerie existed, for the entertainment of children and picnickers. The greater number of animals would be local species. The unsuspecting animals were referred to as "game" and regulations for hunting them were to be posted in front of their cages.(8) In 1919-1920, the Zoo moved into an arm of Cabrillo Canyon west of a then existing five-acre "Indian Village and Painted Desert," a relic of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition used for many years by the San Diego Council of the Boy Scouts of America. The Zoological Society had applied for 200 acres; however, voter approval of an allotment of 17.42 acres, on December 7, 1920, to the Board of Education for the construction of Roosevelt Junior High School and other depletions, mostly for highway construction, brought the Zoo's 1999 acreage to 124.

In December 1921, Ellen Browning Scripps donated $9,000 for fencing to enclose grounds and animals, thus allowing the charging of admission fees to everybody except children, who were admitted free. Dr. Nathaniel Slaymaker, who it was claimed had designed zoological gardens in the East, drew up landscape plans. The Zoo extended toward the edge of Cabrillo Canyon on the west, El Prado on the south, and Richmond Street and Roosevelt Junior High School on the north. As the Zoo leases the land it occupies from the City of San Diego Property Department for $1 a year, voter approval was not required for its occupation of free public park land. The current 55-year lease runs out on January 1, 2034. The city can terminate the lease on 30 days prior notice. The lease grants the Zoo the right to charge "reasonable parking fees" in a parking lot at the east end of the gardens to defray the cost of the "public parking facility." Whatever the Zoo's right may be, the San Diego City Council in May 1964 and April 1984 turned down the Zoo's request to impose parking fees.(9)

In its formative 1922-1923 years, when the San Diego Zoo went from 32 antiquated animal cages on the east side of Park Boulevard to approximately 99 acres from Alameda Street (today Zoo Drive) on the west to the east slopes of Cabrillo Canyon, seven people deserved credit for the

Zoo's extraordinary growth. These were Ellen Browning Scripps, Dr. Harry Wegeforth, John D. Spreckels, Frank H. Buck and Mr. and Mrs. Patrick O'Rourke. While previous writers have placed Dr. Wegeforth first in this list, it was Miss Scripps who, through her cash donation of $57,382, really got the Zoo going. Of this munificent sum, $15,000 was allotted for a director's salary for three years at $5,000 a year and $12,382 was expended on a flying cage, $11,000 on dams, $10,000 on lion's grottos, and $9,000 for fencing. In 1923 Frank H. Buck was chosen as director. Because of his fame as a collector of animals, Buck got the Zoo orangutans, rhinoceros, kangaroos, leopards, sacred monkeys, flamingoes, cranes, turtles from Magdalena Bay, what was billed as "the only sea elephant in captivity," and "Diablo," a 23-foot python and the Zoo's number-one visitor attraction during those periods when he was force-fed from a sausage stuffer. A trainer of wild animals, Buck trained elephants and camels at the Zoo so that children, sailors and celebrities could ride them. During Buck's short tenure, the San Diego Shriners put up money to help the Zoo purchase Bactrian and dromedary camels from a Hollywood movie set. He was removed by the Zoological Society at the instigation of Dr. Wegeforth after three months because Wegeforth claimed he would not take orders. His complaint was that Buck had authorized construction of a pen for cassowaries, birds that, if allowed to run free, can cause serious injuries to onlookers. Leaving aside the question of who should run a zoo, its director or its president, Dr. Wegeforth could not have been pleased that during Frank Buck's period as director, he received most of the praise for the Zoo's accomplishments.(10)

Financier and businessman John D. Spreckels made many recorded and unrecorded donations to the Zoo. The most notable of these was his purchase of two female Asian elephants named "Empress" and "Queenie", whom San Diego children named "Happy" and "Joy." These elephants were part of the enormous shipment that director Buck had brought to the Zoo in May 1923. As part of a jest with Spreckels over whether the elephants were "white elephants," Dr. Wegeforth had one of the elephants "painted" with white powder and flour. He later charged Buck with endangering their lives because Buck had oil applied to their skins!

Taking advantage of an abundance of sea lions off the California Coast and of king and rattlesnakes in San Diego's many canyons, Wegeforth gained the nickname "Trader Wegeforth" by swapping choice specimens with other zoos for non-local animal specimens.

Tom Faulconer, who followed Buck as director from 1923 to 1925, swapped many North and Central American species for species from Australia. These included kangaroos, wallabies, echidnas, Tasmanian devils, dingoes, kookaburras, emus, cassowaries, water dragons, and, most amazingly of all, the Zoo's first koalas, "Snugglepot"and "Cuddlepie."

Dr. Wegeforth wanted a second-in-command who would assume control of the Zoo's day-by-day operations while he was busy with his medical practice and who would be more tractable than Frank Buck. This he found in Belle J. Benchley, who served as "executive secretary" (but in reality as the only female director of a zoo in the world) from 1927 to 1953.

The Ellen B. Scripps Zoological Hospital and Research Center, located behind the Old Globe Theater in Balboa Park, was dedicated April 1, 1927. Here veterinarians examined newly-arrived animals, treated them for parasites and diseases and kept them isolated during a quarantine period. The veterinarians also cared for injured and sick Zoo animals in the hospital and on the grounds. The National Science Foundation provided funds for research projects and the National Institute of Health Council Research Division screened excess primates for the purpose of selecting animals for cancer research. Louis Gill, the Zoo's first architect, designed the hospital in a modified Spanish style.

Dr. Frank Townsend of the Bronx Zoo made two expeditions to the Galapagos Islands in 1928 and in 1933 from which he gave to the San Diego Zoo a number of young tortoises and two large adult male tortoises, "Speed" and "Big Boy," each weighing a little over 500 pounds. "Gertie," another arrival, was a "he," who appeared with Dorothy Lamour and Jack Haley in "Malaya," a 1941 movie.

In 1931 explorers Martin and Osa Johnson brought "M'bongo" and "N'gagi," two juvenile male gorillas, to the Zoo. They reached over 600 pounds each before they passed away in the early 1940's. In 1949 Mrs. Belle Benchley replaced "M'bongo" and "N'gagi" with "Albert," "Bouba" and "Beta," babies at the time who had to be cared for in the nursery. "Albert" later became the father of "Vila," the Zoo's first gorilla birth.

"Bum," an Andean condor with a wing-span of almost 9-feet, appeared at the Zoo in 1929. He became the father of "Guaya" in 1942 after he mated with a female condor who had been brought from Ecuador in 1934.

The Zoo's breeding of condors from North and South American continues to this day.

Mr. and Mrs. O'Rourke established a Zoological Institute for the education of children and an administration and entrance center in the former Nevada and Standard Oil Exposition buildings which had been repaired at a cost of more than $50,000. The two converted buildings joined the Reptile House (former Harvester Building) at the east or main entrance to the zoological grounds. The O'Rourkes quickly became disillusioned with Dr. Wegeforth after he broke his promise of cooperation with them, slighted their education efforts, and started proceedings to have their Institute evicted from a building they had purchased and remodeled, claiming (rightly, it turns out (as all buildings in Balboa Park belong to the City of San Diego) that the building did not belong to them. Wegeforth threatened to resign as Zoo director if the City Council did not evict the O'Rourkes. This led to an astonishing situation in which the City Attorney "forgot" the eviction order he was told to execute, the O'Rourkes stayed for two decades in a building they did not own, and Dr. Wegeforth retained his administrative position.(11) The Elmer C. Otto Educational Center, dedicated December 2, 1966, is today's successor to the O'Rourke Institute.

On November 6, 1934, voters approved a property tax of two cents for each $100 dollars of assessed real and personal property within the city of San Diego for the exclusive maintenance of zoological exhibits, after two similar voter-approved propositions had been held up by technicalities, a tax that in 1998 netted the Zoo $3,748,735. Even so, the Zoo never acquired title to the land it occupied in Balboa Park nor to animals within the Zoo's territory. Land and animals have been and are the property of the City of San Diego and are under the jurisdiction of the City Manager (City Mayor since 2006). Unlike cities where zoos are municipally owned and operated, the Zoo was run by a private group of citizens, who had to abide by restrictions to keep its non-profit or tax-free status. When in August, 1932, San County assessor James Hervey Johnson attempted to auction the Zoo animals to make up $100,000 in back taxes, he was apparently unaware that the Zoo did not own the animals.(12)

After returning from a trading expedition to the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies in 1925, Dr. Wegeforth brought back a Malayan sun bear, many rare birds, and a young orangutan, named "Maggie."

The following year Cy Perkins, the San Diego Zoo's curator of reptiles, came back from a trip to Asia with 26 gibbons, binturongs, Celebes Islands macaques, and an 18-month old orangutan named "Goola."

A round-the-world trip by Dr. Wegeforth in 1940 yielded parrots, hornbills, cranes, storks, pelicans, cassowaries, palm civets, binturongs, a clouded leopard, gibbons, a pair of hippos, a pair of babirusas, two sun bear cubs, four lesser (red) pandas, two orangutans, and a pair of Malayan tapirs. Of the last, Mrs. Belle Benchley called the tapirs "the crowning exhibit in the whole shipment." Much to her consternation, "Trudy," a female tapir became a notorious escape artist.

The San Diego Zoo remained open during World War II(1941-1945) to boost the morale of service people and of civilians. Staff was told to kill animals should they escape from their pens during air raids.

In answer to a recurring need for water, in April 1949 the San Diego Zoo placed in operation a system for reclaiming 200.000 gallons of waste water daily. A pool, containing 500,000 gallons of water, was located in the southwest corner of the Zoo grounds. The pool served as a haven for wild duck and other fowl during the winter season. A pump sent the water up to the deer mesa where it was used to irrigate hillsides bordering on Cabrillo Canyon.(13) Sensing that the Zoo's growing demand for water for its animal exhibits and botanical gardens was increasing each year, the City of San Diego installed water meters to monitor the Zoo's usage of water in 1952 and in 1957 it began charging the Zoo for water that it had previously given to the Zoo free of charge.

Dr, Charles Schroeder, veterinarian and pathologist, succeeded Belle Benchley in 1952. His most noteworthy action for the Zoo was the construction of a 1.33 acre Children's Zoo on the site of the 1915-1916 Japanese Tea House and Garden. Designed by San Diego architect Lloyd Ruocco, construction costs came to $178,000. Admission for children 3 to 10 years of age and for adults was 15 cents and 35 cents respectively. Children could pet and see over 200 animals, including burros, deer, monkeys and turtles as well as more common farm animals such as sheep goats and pigs. A baby gorilla, baby orangutan and baby chimpanzee frolicked on a moated island where they were safe from children and the children safe from them. As the San Diego Zoo had not yet subscribed to the notion that feeding of animals should be left to staff, children (or their adult

escorts) could buy appropriate food from vending machines, push carts and refreshment stands to give to insatiable animals. (Despite widespread non-compliance, signs were posted in the Zoo proper in 1965 asking people not to feed the animals.) A mouse tunnel, snake pit, turtle aquarium and house of spiders, scorpions and insects, not available at the June 30, 1957 dedication were added a year later. Charles Shaw, assistant Zoo superintendent, noted that adults outnumbered children, though, unlike children, their heads got bumps in the small enclosures.

Other innovations by Dr. Schoeder at the San Diego Zoo were the laying out of a flamingo lagoon at the Zoo entrance, the construction of a moving staircase from the primate area to a canyon near the seal tank, the installation of a skyfari aerial tramway, the modernization of the animal hospital, the replacement of cages with moats, the completion of a cable suspension flight cage for birds of prey, including Andean condors, eagles, hawks and vultures, and the installation of a refreshment terrace.

Overriding all these achievements, was the creation of the North County Wild Animal Park that started as an idea in 1959 and became a reality in May 1972, three months before Schroeder retired. Without Schroeder's showmanship and drive, that overcame obstacles and convinced voters to approve a $6 million dollar bond in November 1970, the Wild Animal Park would still be a dream. Its Animal Kingdom and Busch Garden competitors at Orlando and Tampa Bay were stimulated by Schroeders' vision, but their later-day frivolities have not superseded the Wild Animal Park's broad panorama of arbors, grasslands, watering holes, ponds, corrals, hills, and cliffs, the last for adroitly hoofed mountain sheep and goats.

Schroeder realized the physical limitations of the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park, as the following quotation will show, but, in the case of the Wild Animal Park, he provided an alternative to prison-like zoos, where animals look as though they are serving life-sentences. Second best though it may be, the Wild Animal Park supplies city dwellers with their only chance to see animals in conditions like those in the wild that most of them will ever have. The native and exotic plantings at both the Zoo and the Wild Animal Park provide a feast for the eyes. If the animals are not aware of their aesthetic impact of their surroundings they can nevertheless enjoy its practical value in offering shade, room to gambol, soft places to rest, and grasses, leafage and berries to eat.

Schroeder's caveat regarding the Zoo and Wild Animal Park follows:

> Our gorilla exhibit at the Wild Animal Park is one of the largest anywhere. But it's not enough. Animals need space to love and to run, to explore new areas, to climb and do all the things that come naturally. There isn't enough room for that. When you speak of the zoo in Balboa Park, there is nowhere for them to go. There are ninety-two acres locked in. It's bigger than zoos used to be. Let's face it; there were times when you had a tiger in an area sixteen feet by eight feet deep. Anybody knows that's not adequate for a tiger, and there's lots of zoos that have beautiful tiger exhibits, and they're pretty big, but they are inadequate.
>
> No, the Park is not even enough, but we've tried. The idea of putting animals in their natural settings is not new, but the presentation is. The free-ranging animals move in herds, not in pairs, as in most zoos.(14)

Bob Dale, a San Diego television commentator, began publicizing the San Diego Zoo on a local television show called "Zoorama" in 1965. The show, which was syndicated by CBS in 1968, brought animals at the San Diego Zoo to the attention of a nation-wide audience. Guest appearances by Zoo representative Joan Embery and an assortment of attractive and mischievous animals on the popular Johnny Carson television show in the 1970s and 80s did much to reinforce the idea that the San Diego Zoo was the most outstanding zoo in the country. Basking in their new celebrity, public relations staff started calling the San Diego Zoo "world famous," a sobriquet that is now invariably linked to its name. The San Diego Zoo was not original in its choice of an appellation as the same honorific was used by the "world-famous" St. Louis Zoo; the "world-famous Antwerp Zoo, and the "world-famous" Edinborough Zoo. Not willing to use such an over-worked epithet, the Zoo in Melbourne described itself simply as "the world's best."

The Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species (CRES) opened at the San Diego Zoo in 1975 with the purpose of discovering a means to conserve animal species so that they would survive the manifold threats to their existence in a world of expanding human population and pollution. The conservation of animals was always the flowery purpose of the San Diego Zoo and supposedly that of other Zoos as well. As Tom Faulconer so brilliantly expressed it in 1922, the Zoo's purpose was analogous to that of

Indian reservations, which were established “to prevent the extinction of the American Indian.”(15) Still CRES was equipped to recommend solutions to the plight of disappearing animals on a more ecological basis than by putting ranging animals in cages and grottoes for people to look at. CRES has conducted programs to facilitate the reproduction of California condors, tigers, black rhinoceroses, and other animal species, at the San Diego Zoo, the Wild Animals Park, and in native habitats, sometimes alone and sometimes in conjunction with the efforts of other animal conservation organizations. Its major facility, the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center for Conservation Research, is located in the San Diego Wild Animal Park. The Beckman Center maintains a bank of frozen ovaries and sperm of endangered species for possible use at the Zoo or in native habitats should the calamitous extinction occur.

A “Heart of the Zoo” exhibit completed in 1982 during the tenure of Charles Bieler, who served as executive director from 1972 to 1984, represented the Zoo’s first foray into “third-generation” zoo enclosures that were neither cage, grotto nor moat. Built at a cost of $3 million, the exhibit contained an orangutan enclosure, two Siamang enclosures, two types of leaf-eating monkeys, and two aviaries. Constructed according to bioclimatic principles, the exhibits were located on the warmer east side rather than on the cooler west side near Cabrillo Canyon. The animals chosen were grouped according to the places they came from and not, as had been done in the past, according to type. By altering their surroundings;, it was hoped that animals, who were becoming scarce in the wild, would breed in captivity.

Under the guidance of Douglas Myers, a former manager of Anheuser-Busch theme parks in Van Nuys, California and Williamsburg, Virginia who became executive director of the San Diego Zoo in 1985 following the resignation of Charles Bieler, designers and gardeners re-created natural “bioclimatic” settings for the Kopje exhibit, Tiger River Trail, Sun Bear Forest, Gorilla Tropics, and Polar Bear Plunge between 1986 and 1996. These “let’s pretend” landscapes were said to be more conducive to the well-being of the animals displayed than to the enjoyment of visitors. Nevertheless a cage is a cage whether it is called a grotto, an enclosure or a native habitat. Despite A. A. Milne and George Orwell animals don’t talk. If they could talk they might tell voyeurs at zoos things they don’t want to hear. It was precisely because “primitive” human beings from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and islands of the Pacific, who were exhibited beside animals at zoos and World’s Fairs in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

began talking to their visitors that the exhibits were discontinued. After the "savages" mastered the language and customs of their exploiters and used them to their own advantage, their close resemblance to their exploiters could not be dispelled.

The 1985 intervention of Joan Kroc, who donated $3.3 million to construct the Tiger River "total immersion" habitat, came at an opportune time as the San Diego Zoo was about to be cited by the federal government's Department of Agriculture for violation of the Animal Welfare Act if it did not improve sub-standard holding pens for its great cats. Tigers, lions, jaguars, leopards, and Chinese dholes, a specie of dog, had become ill because of crumbling walls, improper drainage, rusting gates, lack of heat and light, and unprotected electrical wiring in pens behind the exhibits, pens which the public does not see. The Kroc donation did not solve all the Zoo's antiquated exhibit problems, but it helped focus attention on a 35-year plan to establish "bioclimatic" zones throughout the Zoo's lease hold.

Another inspection by the Department of Agriculture in 1986 cited the Zoo for failure to fix a faulty filtration system at the Wegeforth Bowl. As a result of their contact with polluted water, seals had incurred eye infections and other ailments. Again, as in the 1984 citation, if the Zoo did not fix the problem it would lose its license. Anonymous and disgruntled employees complained that the executive director's emphasis on entertainment and making money was responsible for the delay in fixing this and other maintenance problems.(16)

To accommodate two pandas Yuan Yuan, a male, and Basi, a female, that arrived from the Fuzhou Zoo in China on July 27, 1987. The Zoo laid out satellite parking on the former Arizona landfill, oiled for the purpose, and at other places. Employees parked on a former Sears Roebuck parking lot and took shuttles to work. The pandas were situated on a former clouded leopard enclosure (the leopard being placed in a temporary off-exhibit holding area.) During their 200-day stay the trained pandas rode a bicycle, balanced on teeter boards, twirled a baton, and pushed a stroller, which was in disregard of the Zoo policy of encouraging only natural behavior. Attendance swelled to over one-half during the visit and sales of panda memorabilia broke records. The Zoo refused to say how much it paid the Republic of China to get the summer-winter attraction.

To those who wonder what a Polar Bear Plunge is doing in San Diego where the average summer temperature is 70 degrees Fahrenheit as opposed to an average summer temperature of 32 degrees in the Northern Arctic zone, the conclusion reached by a *Los Angeles Times* reporter in a column syndicated throughout the United States, but not in San Diego, could only confirm their dire suppositions. The $5 million dollar plunge that opened in June 1996 was, in the reporter's words; ". . . the most ill-starred venture in the history of this world-famous zoo." The reporter cited the intestinal ailments of an adult bear and her two cubs, caused by eating live trout in their 130,000-gallon, 12-foot deep tank, and their compulsive pacing behavior. Water in the tank was kept at a cool (for San Diego) 55 degrees. Castor, a 26-year old polar bear, died from pneumonia caused by "a ricksettsia bacterial organism found in the trout." Zoo officials responded that polar bears were "charismatic invertebrates" and that the Zoo had a long history of keeping them "in good health."(17)

Providing animal "interaction" of a fantasy kind, a four-plus acre re-creation of the Ituri rain forest from the Democratic Republic of Congo, completed in May 1999, owed more to Tarzan movies than to Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" short story. It embraces sculptures of hippos, a hippo pool with tilapa fish who eat hippo dung and old hippo skin, an underwater viewing window, replicas of Mbuti homes, an assortment of okapis, otters, turacos, guenons and turaco birds who frolic among bamboo, ficus, banana, tulip, and yellow trumpet trees, and an inevitable souvenir shop dispensing cutesy mementoes. (The Congo, incidentally, is still a "Heart of Darkness." Read your daily newspaper.) A 3.4 acre Joan Kroc Monkey Trails and Forest Tales habitat completed in 2005, is the Zoo's latest simulated eco-system. Total cost of the project came to $28.5 million, with $10 million coming from the Joan Kroc estate and the balance from fundraising. Here mangabeys, guenons, mandrills, bearded and warty pigs, a clouded leopard, exotic birds, amphibians, reptiles, crocodiles, and pygmy hippos live in a state of mutual harmony or mutual avoidance. If it is not exactly Edward Hicks' "The Peaceable Kingdom"(1816-1849), neither is it Henri Rousseau's "The Hungry Lion Throws Itself on the Antelope"(1905). A plan is in the works to expand the egregiously-small Elephant Mesa in Balboa Park, home to two Asian and one African elephant, from less than one acre to two acres. It supposedly will contain education exhibits about extinct elephants from the Pleistocene era as well as exhibits of elephants of today. The exhibit is in no sense a re-creation of a wild habitat, which,

considering the wide range that herds of elephants traverse in Africa and Asia, would have been an impossibility.

Like the U. S. Navy, the Zoo has always had a large number of supporters who backed the Zoo through thick and thin. These supporters came from the echelons of San Diego business and military men with professionals in medicine and education giving the undertaking erudite respectability. But even in its earliest days, a socially conscious faction opposed the Zoo's domineering power and acquisitiveness. George W. Marston, devotee of parks and spokesperson for San Diego as a City Beautiful, was in the forefront of attempts to balance the Zoo's interests with the larger interests of Balboa Park and of citizens of the city.(18) Mayor John L. Bacon, an engineer who helped lay out the aquatic features of the Zoo, Park Board members Hugo Klauber, John Forward, Jr. and architect William Templeton Johnson, the Federated Trades Council and the San Diego Chamber of Commerce opposed Dr. Wegeforth's proposal to give the Zoological Society exclusive control of the San Diego Zoo. The *San Diego Union* editorial staff was, however, in favor. The proposition went down to defeat, April 7, 1925, with an official vote of 7,930 yes and 13,242 no.

As a non-profit corporation made up of a volunteer Board of Trustees, a salaried administrative staff, and hourly-paid employees, the San Diego Zoological Society is beset with many of the problems that afflict large corporations, public or private, such as sloppy bookkeeping, extravagant expenditures, padded expense accounts and figurehead positions. A number of these problems surfaced in January, 1983, when 130 of the Zoo's 1,200 employees revolted against the way the Zoo was being conducted. Some of these employees resigned in protest; others were expunged from the payroll. These employees charged that the Zoo management was top-heavy with supervisors, was using emergency reserves to pay for a "Heart of the Zoo" exhibit, was responsible for a decline of 100 in animal species over a period of ten years, was putting circus acts—some with clowns—ahead of caring for and showing animals in appropriate settings, and was diverting leased Zoo cars to private business.(19)

In September 1996, in collaboration with the People's Republic of China, the Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species embarked on an ambitious panda reproduction program which, coincidentally, led to the San Diego Zoo having pairs of pandas on loan for reproduction and genetic studies. Their ability to draw crowds of fascinated onlookers was regarded

as a fortuitous byproduct of the studies. On August 21, 1999 Bai Yun gave birth to Hua Mei, having been artificially inseminated by reluctant father Shi Shi. A second panda cub, Mei Sheng, was born on August 19, 2003 to Bai Yun and Gao Gao, a more complaisant partner than Shi Shi, who had been returned to China. A third panda cub was born August 2, 2005 to Bai Yun and the ever ready Goa Goa. According to their agreement with Chinese authorities, all cubs born to pandas on loan to the San Diego Zoo are to be returned to China at the end of a three-year period. The 12-year loan of breeding pandas did not come cheap as the San Diego Zoo must contribute $1 million each year to the Chinese National Conservation Plan for the Giant Panda and Its Habitat and pay the Chinese government a one-time fee of about $600,000 each time a cub is born. This money is in addition to whatever is required for the pandas' upkeep while they are in San Diego.

While the San Diego Zoo has been vocal about what is doing to preserve endangered species, it is quiet about what it is doing to get rid of aged and unwanted animals. In common with most—if not all—zoos in the country the San Diego Zoo does not offer cradle to grave security to its inmates. Unlike endangered species, some animals in zoos (and in circuses and in private collections) can be become superfluous simply because they breed so much that they become commonplace economic burdens with little spectator appeal. The zoo-going public wants to see young, playful and energetic animals. They are turned off by an abundance of ailing and apathetic animals nearing the end of their life spans. To get rid of surplus animals, zoos resort to middle men who acquire surplus animals for an unstated or false purpose, which often turns out to be quarry for hunters in private ranches. Such was the case in 1991 when the San Diego Zoo sold two surplus Dybowski sika deer to the Priour Ranch in Ingraham, Texas, a deed that earned the Zoo a rare reprimand from the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums(20) In the same year the San Diego Zoo sold Edward Novack a European boar. The boar wound up as a "trophy animal' at a "canned" hunt. The public relations director at the San Diego Zoo said the Zoo would no longer have dealings with Novack(21) Even endangered specimens were not immune from the illicit dealings of Earl Thomas Schultz, San Diego Zoo curator of reptiles, who in August 1999 sold rare Australian pythons, which he "stole" from the Zoo, for $70,000.(22)

Ignoring the protests of Zoo critics, one of whom—Ray Ryan—was a member of the Zoo's staff in charge of elephants, Douglas Myers, executive

director of the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park, transferred elephants Winkie, Tatima and Peaches from the Wild Animal Park to the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago in 2003. This, despite warnings from *In Defense of Animals*, an animal rights organization, hat the transfers would lead to the elephants' premature deaths. Myers considered the transfers necessary as the Wild Animal Park had to make room for young elephants from Swaziland that "were scheduled to be culled" [read "killed"]. Myers had an option that has been increasingly taken by zoos throughout the United States—Detroit Zoo (Michigan), Chehaw Wild Animal Park (Georgia), Henry Vilas Zoo (Wisconsin), Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo (Louisiana), Mesker Park Zoo (Indiana), Frank Buck Zoo (Texas)—namely the transfer of unwanted and aged elephants to a 2,700-acre elephant sanctuary in Hohenwald, Tennessee or to the 115-acre Performing Animal Welfare Sanctuary outside Sacramento, California. True, to IDA's predictions, moving the elephants from the San Diego Wild Animal Park's warm outdoor surroundings to the cold indoor surroundings in Chicago resulted in the deaths of all three elephants. In defense of his actions Myers maintained that "it is important for children to experience the wonder of the incredible animals in zoos that have qualified for accreditation rather than in private organizations [read animal sanctuaries] that do not have education and conservation programs."(23)

Saying that zoos exist for the entertainment and education of children is always the trump card that zoo administrators play when hard-pressed to justify their existence. Children, as any child psychologist would avow, are a varied lot. Their reactions to animals in zoos vary depending on several factors, such as age, background, parental influence, and their own propensity for either empathy or violence. Indeed the experiment of allowing children free entrance to the San Diego Zoo lasted for about one year. In 1922 the Zoo was compelled to charge admission to children more than 12 years of age unless accompanied by an adult in order to curb vandalism. The June 22, 1922 edition of the *San Diego Union* was not specific as to the nature of the vandalism however; it is likely that, among other things, it included the tormenting of captive animals. No zoo administrator today and few in Dr. Harry Wegeforth's lifetime (1882-1941) would agree with his statement, as quoted by his son Milton, that "little children could care less about a tiger or an elephant, but they like to chase the animals."(24)

The San Diego Zoo has greatly improved sanitary conditions at the Zoo; nevertheless many children find the odor of feces and urine to be

offensive. The Zoo has tried to supplement its educational character by offering special classes to children. Without theses classes, the experience of walking from one animal exhibit to another can be exciting, boring or terrifying depending on the disposition of the animals on display. To find out how animals behave without human interference—that is in the wild—requires much more in the way of adventure and maturity than the Zoo and the children can supply. Zoos cannot control the sexual behavior of their primates and other mammals though attempts have been made to do this with sex-depressant pills. To be true to natural conditions animals should be allowed to do what their instincts dictate and they should also be allowed to eat meat and poultry with children and adults looking on.

The way we treat animals, philosopher Immanuel Kant observed, determines the way we treat human beings(25). It can be kindly or hostile. The relation of children to animals, as also the relation of adults to animals, is a conundrum. Some portion of adults and children—in so far as adult views percolate down to children—believe in Genesis 1:26-27 which states: “And man shall have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” The living demonstration of this credo is the zoo where animals exist to cater to the whims and prejudices of human beings.

A hope, by no means certain of consummation, is that by visiting zoos, children will undergo a process of maturation during which the myths they have been taught, about Rudolf the Red-Nose Reindeer, Bambi and Smoky the Bear, and about man’s superiority to animals will fall away. Perhaps children will one day see animals as they are and not as amusing and dumb beasts sluggishly existing in artificial and confined settings. Children, and the adults they will become, will then realize, that they have an ethical obligation to keep these animals from disappearing in the lands in which they were born and to which they have become adapted through eons of evolutionary change.

Some of the Zoo’s mistakes have been corrected, others are still present. The urge to make money overrides aesthetics, education and animal welfare. Animals are made to behave like human beings in shows held daily to the applause of gullible audiences, who think such exhibitions are "cute." Restaurants, food stands and souvenir shops are placed at almost every intersection. Rides on an overhead tram and on buses with amplified speeches from guides are available on payment of additional fees. The

guides, of course, do not point out those animals who exhibit neurotic and unruly behavior in enclosures that—no matter how large and sanitary—cannot duplicate the natural environments, social groupings, and outlets for skills in the lands where their species evolved, nor do they tell of older and surplus animals the Zoo gets rid of to make room for younger or more choice specimens.

Many of the Zoological Society's money-making activities may be justified; nonetheless, the preoccupation with peripheral activities—circuses, rides for thrills and commercial ventures—may corrupt the purpose for which good zoos are established—to stimulate curiosity and to develop respect for non-human forms of life with whom human beings are inextricably related. A comparison of San Diego Zoo admission single adult admission charge ($32.00) with 50 profit and non-profit Zoos and/or Aquariums in the United States shows that the San Diego Zoo charges more for no frills gate admission than any other non-profit zoo in the country, but not as much as commercial zoos and aquariums, $67.00 for a basic one-day adult admission to Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando; $61.95 for basic admission to Anheuser-Busch Sea World in Orlando; $54.00 for basic admission to Anheuser-Busch Sea World in San Diego\;, and $42.29 for basic admission to Anheuser-Busch Sea World in San Antonio.

If the Zoo had maintained a modest collection of animals, on the order of the Zoo in Central Park, New York City, and not on the order of the Zoo in the Bronx there would not have been a problem in the past, the present or the future. But the Zoo, chaffing at its limitations, asked for and generally got more land, money and dispensations. The San Diego Zoological Society, incidentally, used the plan and special semi-independent status of the Bronx Zoo as its model when it was first getting started, In this connection it is interesting that the Bronx Zoo today charges adults $14.00, children, between the ages of 2 and 12 $10.00, and seniors 65 and over $12.00 for general gate admission with Wednesdays as a free day while the San Diego Zoo charges adults $32.00 and children, between the ages of 3 and 11, $19,75 with free admission for everybody on the first Monday in October, in honor of Dr. Wegeforth, and for children under 12 during the entire month of October.

San Diegans often pay lip service to Balboa Park, but they have not in recent years shown a deep-seated commitment to maintaining the park as

an open, green, friendly space where people from all walks of life can gather for peaceful play and rest.

The *San Diego Union* and its former auxiliary the *San Diego Tribune* have run editorials deploring institutional expansion in Balboa Park(26), however, when presented with an immediate and pressing need, writers of editorials seem to have forgotten previous editorial positions.

The San Diego Zoo has long desired to convert the 25-acre garage in front of its main entrance into Zoo land. To this end it has tried two times to acquire land on the east slopes of Florida Canyon for a garage consisting of 2,000 automobile spaces in 1970 and 8,000 automobile spaces in 1997. After these plans failed, due to environmental opposition, the Zoo waited a decent interval to let citizen passions cool and in 1999 announced a plan to convert land on which the War Memorial Building sits into a parking garage. This would free the adjacent south parking lot for whatever the Zoo plans to put on it. Veterans and some neighborhood residents north of the Zoo's holdings raised a cry that was even greater than the opposition to moving into Florida Canyon. Foes of the Zoo's plans put the War Memorial Building on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001, which effectively nullified the Zoo's plan.

Landscape architect Vicki Estrada who had been a vocal opponent of the Zoo's plan to move on War Memorial Building land received a commission in 2001 to prepare plans for an underground garage, partially under the present parking lot and partially on an irregularly-shaped strip of land to the south that would terminate somewhere near the Plaza de Balboa. Strident veterans no longer had anything to protest about but the neighborhood groups and a number of landscape architects found much to dislike about Estrada's and the Zoo's plans. Their main complaint was the loss of free park open-air space that the Zoo would fence off, thus providing access only to those who paid to get inside. Out of 1083.403 Balboa Park acres, the public can visit 605 acres without paying a fee, a total that would be reduced to 580 if the Zoo acquires the presently free parking lot. The Zoo has been reticent about what it wants to put on top of the parking structure which has led to surmises that it is contemplating an amusement rather than an animal park on the order of Fort Worth's "Texas Wild" or Tampa Bay's "Busch Gardens".

After several hearings the Estrada/Zoo plan became the Balboa Park Promenade Concept Plan. This plan would allow a perimeter screening of the expanded Zoo grounds above an underground garage with a double row of trees on both sides of Park Boulevard extending from the War Memorial Building south to the Rose Garden and the Plaza de Balboa. A relocated miniature train on newly-installed tracks would run along the Zoo side of this perimeter and the existing carousel would be relocated within Zoo grounds. A corridor between the trees would acquire fountains or sculpture at pivotal locations. New entrances to the Zoo would be located on the south border of the expanded Zoo property and a restaurant and interpretative center would be located somewhere on top of the garage. This is the first hint of what the Zoo plans for the top surface.

Street connections to the Zoo from Zoo Drive and Park Boulevard would remain as they are now, but some changes to the connection with Balboa Park south of Spanish Village and north of the Natural History Museum would have to be made. These involve tearing down the present pedestrian bridge from the Rose Garden to the Plaza de Balboa and building another pedestrian bridge across Park Boulevard in line with the north façade of the Natural History Museum and building an underpass for automobiles where a road now exists.

A unique feature of Estrada's plan is the digging of a ditch ("well") that will run parallel to the east side of the underground parking structure. The ditch will dissipate exhaust fumes and provide daytime lighting for the parking structure. What this ditch does to the topography of Balboa Park, the need for drainage, and the possibility of accidental falls requires investigation.

As one study leads to another State representative Christine Kehoe in January 2002 got a state grant for a $975,000 Jones and Jones study, which supported the Zoo's underground garage, give or take a few automobile spaces, and recommended an additional garage on the east slope of Cabrillo Canyon to provide access to the Old Globe Theater, and another parking garage at Inspiration Point. Jones and Jones also proposed a pedestrian bridge across Florida Canyon and other park-wide improvements. As not all of the state grant money had been used up another study by CIVITAS was commissioned to produce a parking and circulation plan for Balboa Park that would be cheaper than the Jones and Jones plans and that could be put in place immediately. Having been approved by the San Diego City Council on

April 13, 2004 the Balboa Park Promenade plan is still on the doable project list. The other two garages will have to wait until such time as Santa Claus appears.

The Zoo's wrangle over its proposed above-ground extension and below-ground garage recalls the experience of other cities. For example, landscape architects and environmentalists in San Diego, who spoke against the Promenade Plan, may have been inspired by the actions of landscape architects who opposed the Audubon Nature Institute's plans to expand a low-intensity use golf course in Audubon Park, New Orleans in 2001 and a plan to convert open public land in Woodland Park, Seattle, into an above-surface parking structure (due for completion in 2008). To show that revenue seekers don't always win, the Landmark Society of Western New York negotiated an agreement with Monroe County in 2004 that would enable the Zoo in Rochester, New York's Seneca Park to expand an elephant enclosure without encroaching on park lands and would provide for off-site parking during periods of peak demand.

The four level, 4,725 plus car space underground garage proposed by the Park Promenade Plan is not included in the Zoo lease so it will have to be operated either by the Park Department or by an outside concessionaire. An attempt in 1962 to institute paid parking in Balboa Park aroused such a storm that the idea was quickly canceled. Somehow the City must find a means to finance the garage and the Zoo must find a means to finance whatever plan it has in the works for the top of the garage. Jones and Jones gave $225 million as the total cost for all its proposed parking structures and $350 million as the total cost of parking structures and other proposed improvements. Smith Barney, an underwriting bond firm, gave $95 million as the cost for the Park Promenade parking structure. If experience is any indication, these cost estimates are on the downside.

Two assertions that planners are not going to like are nevertheless true. One, fast-track construction of the Balboa Park underground garage, that will be demanded by the Zoo and the Natural History Museum, will result in cost overruns, engineering mistakes and construction delays. Two, designing underground garages without knowing what is going on top is foolhardy. Walls, columns, caissons and infrastructure below must be strong enough to support buildings, pavilions, monuments, sculpture, gardens and fountains that will be placed on top.

The situation at Millennium Park in Chicago has many similarities to the situation in Balboa Park. Both plots are almost identical in size, 25 acres in Balboa Park and 24.5 acres in the railroad cut at the east (Michigan Avenue) end of Grant Park in Chicago. A consortium of business leaders, politicians, park managers, and architects put underground garages in the open cut formerly used by the Illinois Railroad. On top of the garage and overlapping land they installed a number of amenities, some of which are free to all. These include the Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the Bicentennial Park Bridge, the Chase Promenade, the Crown Fountain, the Exelon Pavilions Harris Theater, the Kapoor Sculpture on SBC Plaza, the Lurie Garden, the McCormick Tribune Plaza and Ice Rink, and the Wrigley Square and Millennium Monument. Costs for the underground garages containing 4,300 parking spaces came to $105.6 million. A portion of this cost is to be paid with revenue from the underground garages.(27)

Lessons drawn from the Chicago experience could lead to the transfer of the entire Park Promenade/Underground Garage Park Plan to the jurisdiction of the San Diego Park Department. It is perhaps unrealistic to think that San Diego could make of this space an amenity that would rival Chicago's. But was not also the holding of the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego in 1915 also unrealistic in the minds of skeptics? Even an open green landscaped area would be a boon to the city. With a little imagination and expense the entire expanse could become a modern plaza that would complement the Old-World style Plaza de Panama and would also be blessedly free of automobiles.

Unless a majority of the citizens in San Diego rise up to protest the Zoo's plans it is likely they will go forward. The Zoo has enough leverage with donors to develop the top of the underground garage. It is not so certain that the City can come up with the money to construct the underground garage, though if the economy should improve and legislators in Sacramento and Washington, DC should cooperate even this Herculean task might become possible. The possibility of paid parking to help pay for the underground garage or of voter-approval of bonds to pay for the project flies in the face of past precedents. As the Zoo has already waited for four decades to convert its parking lot, it will probably have to wait four more to get what it wants. Meanwhile there will be who-knows-how-many more Jones and Jones type studies. Politicians are notorious for getting grants for studies and voters are notorious for rejecting bonds to fund plans outlined by these studies. So it goes.

In the June/July 1985 issue of *Child* a group of zoo professionals rated the San Diego Zoo second best in the nation, after Lowry Park in Tampa, Florida. The San Diego Zoo was praised for its qualified staff, 95 percent of whom held degrees in zoology, the 30 exhibits in the Children's Zoo and attached nursery for sick and weak baby animals, its "popular" Polar Bear Plunge, and the Zoo's monetary contributions to animal conservation. These accolades appear to justify the San Diego Zoo's claim to be among the world's best, if not the number one zoo publicists sometimes have held it out to be. Many in the zoo business and many outside would rate the Zoo differently. For example, in 1985, David Hancocks, a former director of the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle criticized the San Diego Zoo as "a bleak place."..."All the animals ever see is the perimeter of the wall around them, but they don't have places to get out of view." William Conway, president of the New York Zoological Society, also disparaged the San Diego Zoo's claim to be a leader in exhibit display. "The best waterfowl collection in the world is in England. The best exhibit of nocturnal animals is in the Bronx. The greatest number of species is in West Berlin. The best gorilla exhibit is in Seattle. The best seal and sea lions are in Tacoma. San Diego has a long history with koalas but Los Angeles put together a much more exciting exhibit." So professionals said in 1985. What would they say in 2006?(28)

To maintain its appeal the San Diego Zoo must compete with quasi-professional zoo establishments such as Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando, Florida and \Busch Gardens in Tampa Bay, Florida. These latter institutions have bigger budgets and a more highly trained professional staff, many of whom they lured away from the San Diego Zoo.

In the year 2006 the San Diego Zoo is at a crossroads. Its trustees must decide if the Zoo can continue to sustain itself at its present level or if it should find a less expensive level for its operations.. For its part, the City of San Diego must decide if the economic value of the Zoo in attracting tourists to the city outweighs the loss of public land in its crowded and park-deprived inner core.

Trustees who have brought the Zoo to its present level of eminence must ascertain if the law of diminishing returns and of outside competition will relegate the Zoo to a third, fourth or lower place. Each step down means, decreased revenues. Not the least of the Trustees' worries, though often overshadowed by money changers, is the need to provide safe, sanitary

and livable quarters for its 800 plus animal species. If they do not do this, various government agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture and the Center for Disease Control will step in, not only with fines but with the threat of terminating the Zoo's license.

Meanwhile the Zoo will continue to attract Zoo lovers and repel Zoo haters. A quotation from "I know why the caged bird sings" seems an apt end to this chronicle of the San Diego Zoo's ups and downs:

> I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
> When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore, -
> When he beats his bars and would be free;
> It's not a carol of joy or glee,
> But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
> But a plea that upward to Heaven he flings –
> I know why the caged bird sings!
>
> Paul Lawrence Dunbar

Richard W. Amero
December 5, 2006

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