

# DELIGHT FOR SHOGUN, GIFT FROM NEHRU: History of Traveling Menageries of Japan

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Throughout the centuries, traveling menageries of various sizes toured across this nation of the arc-shaped archipelago off eastern Asia. This account represents a tribute to the beasts and men who entertained the public during their brief lives, only to perish in the dust bin of history, largely forgotten. Your writer will review the highlights of the menageries that have dotted the history of animal exhibitry in Japan. In earlier years there were numerous traveling exhibits consisting of one animal, or two of the same species. Although

A World Animal Expo circus poster from the mid-1950s. All illustrations are from the author.



these single specimen or species exhibits would make a fascinating subject, a traveling menagerie in this account is defined as an exhibit with a multiple species collection.

However, two exceptions have to be made because of the immense cultural impact they cast upon the society. The first one, an Asian elephant, was not an animal for public exhibit, yet his contributions to folk culture were remarkable. He was the very first elephant for the innumerable people who were lost in wonder at the sight of him during his long journey across Japan.

### Pioneering Crowd Pleasers

During the Edo or Tokugawa Era (1603-1867) the emperor resided in Kyoto without political power, while the government was in the hands of the feudal general shogun in Edo,

later named Tokyo.

Rulers of centralized feudalism came to view foreign influences as a threat to the stability of their country, and beginning in 1638 they closed the door to the outside world. For more than two centuries this isolation sealed Japan as completely as possible from foreign contacts. Of all Europeans, only the Dutch were allowed to trade through Nagasaki on Kyushu Island in southern Japan. Isolation, ironically, caused the people to draw unusually sharp attention to anything from abroad. Their extraordinarily keen

curiosity and voracious appetite for knowledge about the outside world continue today.

By order of the shogun, on 7 June 1728 two elephants arrived at the port of Nagasaki, delivered by a Chinese trader's boat.<sup>1</sup> The male was said to be seven years old and the female, five years old. She died on 11 September while they were in temporary housing in Nagasaki. Their arrival marked the fifth shipment of elephants to Japan, yet the remaining male became the most well known during centralized feudalism.

After losing his mate, he left Nagasaki for Edo on 13 March of the following year, guarded by a 17-member security force. The party entered

Another World Animal Expo poster from the mid-1950s.





Yano menagerie's lion, claimed to be from the King of Denmark, arrived in Kobe in 1907 and stayed with Yano for 12 years. A postcard from Iwao Akune collection.

Osaka on 16 April, and arrived at Kyoto on 26 April, surrounded by hordes of people. Residents were ordered to keep dogs and cats off the street, and to keep horses and cows quiet so as not to spook the shogun's elephant. They were also ordered to take extra caution for fire prevention.

While in Kyoto he was bestowed a title of nobility and on 28 April, the emperor and the monk-emperor (a retired emperor in holy orders) granted him an audience at the imperial palace. It is said the elephant knelt down and took a bow. The titled elephant and his entourage left Kyoto for Edo on the following day, continuing their eastward journey at a pace of 20-24 kilometers (12-15 miles) a day. On their route bridges were repaired, and roads were improved. On 25 May the party entered Edo, and two days later, he was taken to the Edo Castle to have the honor of being viewed by the shogun himself.

As poems were written (including those by the emperor and monk-emperor) and books were published about him, the elephant took the society by storm. Elephant designs became quite fashionable. Playwrights did not miss this opportunity; soon a new kabuki play about an elephant, a nobleman and a samurai (warrior) made a debut (this play made a revival in October 1933 in Tokyo).

The shogun took a liking to this elephant. While the elephant was

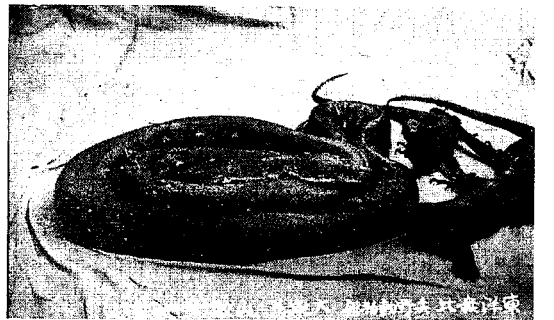
kept in the palace for 13 years, he was taken to the Edo Castle repeatedly.

However, maintaining an elephant is a costly undertaking, then and now. Transferring an elephant to the Castle, as well as feeding him, became a burden, and a decision

was made to look for a taker. He was released to a farmer, whose inadequate care led to an unfortunate death of the elephant at the age of 21. (As for public exhibits, a female Asian elephant arrived in 1862 and was on exhibit in Edo in the following spring; in the closing days of the centralized feudalism this became the most notable commercial success for an exotic animal exhibition.)

A century later another page was added to history. This time it was a pair of dromedary camels, brought in by the Dutch arriving at Nagasaki on 1 July 1821. They were from Persia (now Iran); the male was said to be five years of age, and the female, four. After changing ownership several times the pair fell in the hand of a showman, thus beginning the course to become popular cultural icons. Their trail began on Kyushu Island leading to Osaka and Kyoto, and eventually to Edo on 6 August of 1824 where huge crowds greeted them. The magnitude of their popularity and the wild enthusiasm generated is utterly unthinkable today.

Songwriters churned out ballads, life-sized replicas and children's toys were manufactured, color prints and documents were published. Even a camel-brand charcoal appeared on the market. Because the pair was said to be "affectionate" with each other, human couples in public were often teased as being camels. They were on exhibit in Edo beginning on 9 August. Despite steep admission



Postcards of Yano menagerie, "unequaled in the Orient," from Iwao Akune collection. A giant Siberian tiger, a crocodile and a python with monitor lizards.

fees the house was filled to capacity, on some days exceeding 5,000 viewers. The exhibit was held over time after time, and the camels ended up in Edo for half a year. In total, they were on the road for more than 10 years, making appearances in more than 30 locations, turning the traveling exhibit into a lucrative endeavor.<sup>2</sup>

As a footnote on folk culture, exotic animals were believed to bring about divine favor, a response to prayers and a charm against evil. For instance, a cassowary arrived in Nagasaki in 1789 and was later

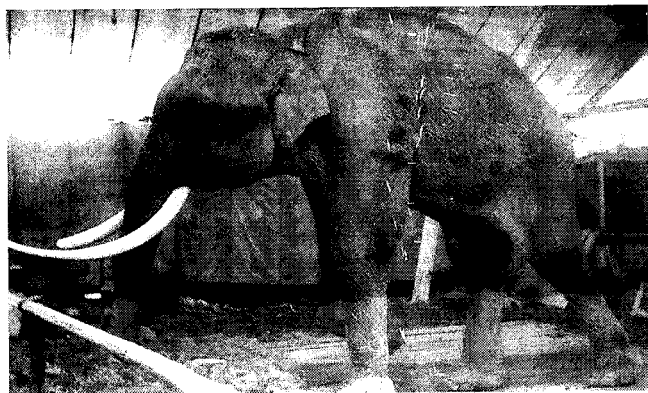


Iwata Yano in traditional garb (far left) with an Indian mahout and Anna the Asian elephant. Postcard from Iwano Akune collection.

placed on exhibit in Osaka and Edo.

It was thought viewing the large bird and touching its feathers would produce medicinal properties. The aforementioned female elephant, on public exhibit in 1863, was also supposed to have sacred power for protection from evil and brought good fortune. In the public's mind this big beast from overseas possessed such magical faculty. In some cases,

Anna the elephant. Yano menagerie postcard, July 1926. Iwano Akune collection.



viewing of such animals was said to be effective in curing ~~said~~ smallpox and measles in children. After the country opened its door to the West such a supernatural appeal was dropped from traveling exhibits, replaced with an emphasis on their educational value.<sup>3</sup>

The self-imposed isolation of Japan came to an end when Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy arrived in 1853 with the demand that Japan open its doors. Once the barrier crumbled, Japanese faced the technical and industrial superiority of the West. Cultural borrowing from abroad, initially from China and Korea, helped Japan enter the industrial age.

Soon, Japan rolled out the welcome mat for the sweeping tide of cultural imports from the West. The window to the outside world shifted from Nagasaki to the port of Yokohama, near Edo.

Starting in Yokohama, the Italian circus of Giuseppe Chiarini toured the country in 1886 and 1887. American and French circuses had made entry into Japan in earlier decades. However, Chiarini was the first to introduce performing exotic animals including lion, tiger and elephant acts. Chiarini was a major sensation. For its Tokyo run 1 September through 30 October 1886, Chiarini erected four tents in a lot about 6,600 square meters or 1.6 acres in size. Immediately behind the

entrance was a menagerie featuring an ostrich, the first in Japan<sup>4</sup>, lion, tiger, elephant, monkey, zebu and giant snake.<sup>5</sup>

At this time, Japan's first zoo in Ueno Park in Tokyo (opened in 1882) was in its infant stage with no large cats or elephant.<sup>6</sup> While in Tokyo Chiarini's tiger gave birth to three cubs, and two of them, a male and a female, were sent to Ueno Zoo on 4 February 1887 in exchange for two brown bears. They were the first tigers in a Japanese zoo, thus beginning the long relationship between circuses and zoos. Thanks to the first Japanese-born tigers, the zoo's attendance surpassed 240,000 that year. A 35.8% increase over the previous year, this was the highest figure since its opening.<sup>7</sup>

Through the floodgates waves of exotic animals began to arrive, enabling the birth of traveling menageries. A wider variety of animals was presented compared to earlier times, including not only large mammals, but smaller animals. A handbill of a traveling menagerie in Osaka in March 1891 carried illustrations of a tiger, leopard (both in cage wagons), camel, porcupine and parrot.<sup>8</sup> Around the turn of the twentieth century, half a dozen large collections crisscrossed the country. At the top of the roster was one owned by a colorful character named Iwata Yano (born 1865). His operation has been ably chronicled by Iwano Akune.<sup>9</sup>

#### It All Began with a Wild Cat

During the Sino-Japanese War

A Malayan tapir. Yano menagerie postcard, July 1926. Iwano Akune collection.



In the mid-1910s Yano strengthened the traveling menagerie with improved wild animal acts by trainer Toyo Yano (stage name; he was no relation to Iwato Yano). Iwao Akune collection.

(1894-1895) Yano was stationed in Korea. He brought home a wild cat (the exact species is not clear) and began a sideshow with just one animal. Up front stood a barker in military uniform, none other than Yano himself. Customers kept piling in, and he added locally collected snakes colored with gold dust. A leopard was added, followed by a tiger, and his business outgrew the sideshow. With a plan for a traveling menagerie Yano purchased two male lions, said to be from Hagenbeck, from a Japanese animal dealer in Kobe. One of them was young with no mane, so they were advertised as a male and a female.

The lions made their debut in Hiroshima in 1907. With lions Yano hit the jackpot; he stuffed the day's income in wooden coal crates, took them to the inn at night, and his wife kept

counting money until dawn. In addition to the lions, a total of 30 animals was on exhibit including a kangaroo, baboon, tiger, wolf, porcupine, peafowl, crane, parrot and giant snake. With education as a catchword, the menagerie was open from nine a.m. to eleven p.m. for 10 days. It was held over for 10 more days because Yano could not accommodate the ever-increasing crowds, particularly school groups.

With rising popularity Yano took bolder public relations tactics, giving the press padded and often-question-

Prime Minister Nehru of India stated that his gift, an elephant named Indira after his daughter, was the ambassador of world peace. His message to Japanese children, was dated 1 September 1949.




Another photo of Toyo Yano. Iwao Akune collection.

able information. News spread that his big lion was captured on Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa as a cub. He was purchased by the Hamburg Animal Company (meaning Hagenbeck) and offered to the emperor of Denmark, who later disposed of him. It was an excellent gimmick. Another story claimed that the menagerie's lynx was the former pet of a defeated Russian general in the Russo-Japanese War.

If this man gave the impression of being a mountebank, it was by no means limited to him. The same tendency may be noted in the operators of privately owned menageries, from the aforementioned camel exhibitor all the way to those who ran the large operations in the 1950s.

Masses of people flocked to see Yano's menagerie everywhere it went. As the business kept growing another unit was created, traveling all across Japan from roughly 1909 to 1912. The famous Danish emperor's lion stayed with the second unit. In one town local police questioned the authenticity of the claim. But Yano prevailed. The police also accused the show of animal cruelty for feeding live rabbits to lions in front of school children, and successfully banned this practice. Each unit



PRIME MINISTER,  
INDIA.

NEW DELHI,  
SEPTEMBER 1, 1949.

**MESSAGE FOR JAPANESE CHILDREN.**

Dear Children,

I am very happy to send you one of our elephants as desired by you. She is a fine elephant, very well-behaved and, I am told, with all the auspicious signs. You should treat this elephant as a gift, not from me, but from the children of India to the children of Japan.

Children all over the world are in many ways like each other. It is when they grow up that they begin to differ and, unfortunately, they sometimes quarrel. We have to put an end to these quarrels of grown-up people and I hope that when the children of India and the children of Japan will grow up, they will serve not only their own great countries, but also the cause of peace and cooperation all over Asia and the world.

So you must look upon this elephant, Indira by name, as a messenger of affection and goodwill from the children of India.

Indira may perhaps feel a little lonely all by herself in Tokyo and might like to have a companion to play with. If you like, we can arrange to send a companion for her so that Indira may be happy in the new land which she is going to make her home.

The elephant is a noble animal much loved in India and very typical of India. It is wise and patient, strong and yet gentle. I hope all of us will also develop these qualities.

I send you my affection and good wishes.

Jawaharlal Nehru  
1949

had nearly an equal number of animals including the basic stock: lion, tiger, leopard, camel and exotic birds. It took two freight cars and over 30 people to transfer more than 40 kinds of animals. There were several other traveling menageries in the early 1910s, but none could compete with this two-unit operation.

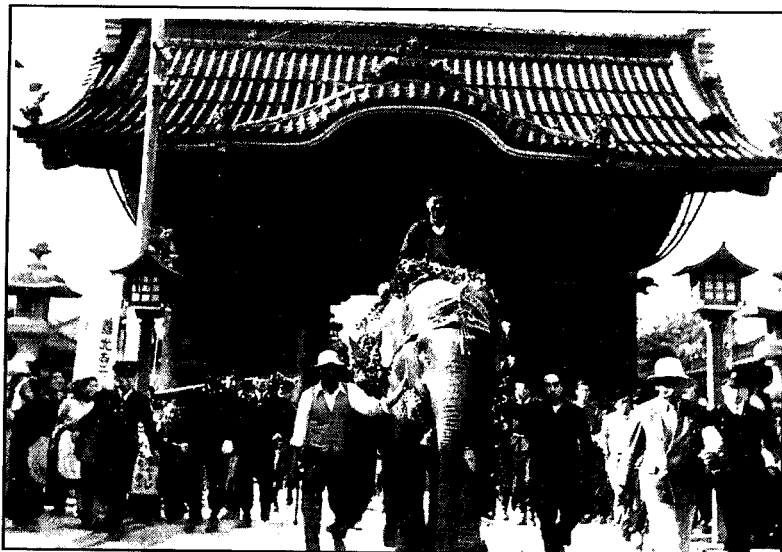
Increasing demand for the crowd-drawing attractions resulted in more innovative steps.


A side show with a Mongolian dwarf woman was added. Elephant acts, albeit simple, became crowd pleasers. New displays such as tiger-and-man sumo wrestling developed into bona fide animal acts by the late 1910s, with a lion, a tiger and a black leopard all in single animal acts. Combining animal acts with aerial acts and acrobatics, a show department was created in 1916, becoming the forerunner of the Yano Circus. (According to Mr. Akune the birth of Yano Circus could also be established as 1907, the year the traveling menagerie began.)

The business was thriving in the summer of 1923, with daily proceeds reaching a whopping fifteen times more than operating costs such as wages and feed for animals. With disposable cash in his hands, Yano was preparing for a trip to Kobe for purchasing animals when he collapsed, caused by a cerebral hemorrhage. After his death in 1926, the once-prosperous operation began to decline. Without a strong leader it kept going downhill, and the traveling menagerie was dissolved in December of 1928.

After the native-born pioneer in animal exhibitry passed on, the public was fortunate enough to have a very special treat. The pioneer with international fame was coming to the Land of the Rising Sun from Germany.

With Hagenbeck's Noah's Ark aboard, the *S.S. Saarland* was put in at Yokohama on 22 March 1933. It was evident, from a newspaper arti-



Ueno Zoo, Tokyo sent a traveling menagerie to the Eastern and Northern parts of Japan in 1950, featuring India the elephant. India visited Zenkoji Temple with police escorts. in Nagana. Tokyo Zoological Park Society photo. 

cle on the following day, that the awe-struck reporter's eyes opened wide at the sight: "Five elephants, 12 tigers, 10 lions, 12 bears including 10 polars, one rhinoceros, two giraffes, six camels, 32 horses, 18 ponies and more. Some were still on the deck, in freight cars bearing big letters, CARL HAGENBECK." On 25 March a Tokyo newspaper carried an ad, four-columns across, by Lorenz Hagenbeck. In this announcement, he stated in his formal style that the 182 animals and his 150-member staff were looking forward to seeing the Japanese people, and that with confidence the staff would make every effort to meet their expectations.<sup>10</sup>

And he kept his word. The Hagenbeck circus became a huge national sensation. In Nagoya it sold out advance-booking tickets for both circus and menagerie. "The very first day, the circus tent was completely surrounded by an enormous throng of people. At the menagerie box-office there was a four-deep queue. It stretched all round us, growing every minute." Hagenbeck continued, "We had a five weeks' run at Nagoya, with two performances daily, at two and five, both always sold out to the last seat. In addition,

on many days we counted no less than twenty-five thousand visitors to the menagerie."<sup>11</sup>

The curtain rose on the modern circus era in Japan when the Chiarini Circus visited. Following Chiarini, Hagenbeck made an immense impact. For instance, Hagenbeck popularized the word "circus" (previously there was no unifying term). Uniformly adopting the new name, circuses

moved into a golden era.<sup>12</sup> Hagenbeck also strengthened the relationship between circuses and zoos. The firm began exporting animals to Japan earlier, but the major impact became noticeable after the dawn of the twentieth century. Particularly, Hagenbeck enriched the collections of Ueno Zoo in Tokyo and Kyoto Zoo.

Prior to the arrival of the circus, Lorenz Hagenbeck began trade negotiations with zoo officials in person. Soon, Ueno Zoo acquired a small menagerie including a giant anteater (first to Ueno) and a pair of giraffes. Four polar bears found a home at Osaka's Tennoji Zoo (they met a tragic death a decade later, as noted below). During the 1933 tour Hagenbeck brought in the first examples of various species in Japan; among them was a pair of South American tapirs. Kyoto Zoo offered a group of East Asian animals consisting of 27 specimens (including seven cranes) in eight species, and received the tapirs in exchange. A black rhinoceros, another first in Japan, was too expensive and left Japan without finding a buyer.

The period from the closure of Yano's menagerie to Hagenbeck's visit was marked by continuing militarism. Japan kept on expanding its territory into the vast area of Asia, eventually plunging its people into the ultimate disaster of World War II. As the nation faced grave reality, a contingency plan was in force to destroy "dangerous" animals in circuses and zoos. In one account, in 1943 seven Asian elephants, 52 lions,



two tigers, eight leopards, six bears and 58 snakes, belonging to 28 circus organizations, were to be destroyed.<sup>13</sup> Many zoo animals were also destroyed by various methods including poisoning, strangulation and in some cases, starvation.

When the war ended in August 1945, the short list of surviving popular zoo animals included three Asian elephants, four giraffes and one chimpanzee. One of the elephants died after a few months, leaving only two in Nagoya.<sup>14</sup> Across the land cities lay in ruins; every essential need including food, clothing and housing was in short supply. Demoralized and devastated, the populace was in dire need for something to brighten their day. Recovery was slow, but trickles of exotic animals began to reach the Japanese shores. These included elephants from southern Asia.

The current generation of Japanese cannot begin to fathom what "peace" meant in the years following the end of war: precious and noble. In this context, the arrival of an elephant carried significance far greater than any other exotic beast coming to town. The local zoo welcoming an elephant reminded citizens that the nightmarish years of military dictatorship and war were now behind them, that they could take families to the zoo again. For them, a zoo symbolized peace; they knew that only during peacetime could a zoo thrive. And without question, the elephant ranks near the top of all essential zoo animals.

Elephants were sorely missed in Tokyo, and children's desire to view a real elephant was mobilized into a campaign. As it gained momentum children sent 815 letters to Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, asking for an elephant. Deeply moved, Nehru granted their wishes. Named Indira after his daughter, the 15-year old female elephant left Calcutta on 29 August 1949, escorted by two mahouts, and arrived at Tokyo on 23 September. Her debut in Ueno Zoo caused a sen-



Ainu, an Indigenous people in Hokkaido, the northern mainland, greeting Indira during the Hokkaido stand of the traveling menagerie, July 1950. Tokyo Zoological Park Society photo.

sation and fervent enthusiasm of Olympic proportions. It was a national event, as Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida himself attended the ceremony to officially receive the elephant at the Zoo on 1 October 1949.<sup>15</sup>

Indira was just another work elephant in a timber camp. Fate swept her away from Mysore in southern India; she was appointed an Ambassador of Peace by Nehru, as explained in his letter to the children of Japan. Her arrival signaled the beginning of Ueno Zoo's recovery from the war years. Indira, however, was a gift not only to Tokyo, but to all the children of Japan. While a record crowd (over 3.55 million paid visitors for 1949) flooded Ueno Zoo beyond capacity there was another campaign under way, this time by children of other cities. They asked that Indira visit their hometowns. Children's voices reached Dr. Tadamichi Koga, Ueno Zoo Director, who was Japan's Mr. Zoo.

#### Ambassador of Peace Hits the Road

Dr. Koga could no longer ignore the petitions from children, and politicians who could pressure the zoo, and a decision was made to take Indira on the road. However it was highly unusual to expect a government-

owned zoo to operate a traveling menagerie, for municipalities are not known for mobility or expediency in such endeavors, then and now. Enter *Asahi Shimbun*, an influential national daily newspaper well experienced in logistics and promotion, and Japan National Railway, known for its efficiency. With them as partners, the zoo was ready for this unprecedented venture.

A total of 18 animals in 13 species was assembled including Indira, a brown bear (later replaced with a lion), two black bears, a Hamadryas baboon, four monkeys (one each of savanna, Japanese, crab-eating and Formosan rock), two red foxes, two raccoon-like dogs, three blue peafowl, a salmon-crested cockatoo and a sulphur-crested cockatoo. It was a modest collection by any standard, but for the eager public it mattered little. Three renovated freight cars were allocated; one for Indira, one for the rest of the animals and equipment and the last one, for the staff. The traveling menagerie began to leave Tokyo on 28 April 1950. The route covered the Eastern and Northern parts of the country that had only one small zoo at that time.

The manager of the traveling team was Ichizo Hashio, a gifted Ph. D., veterinarian and a colonel in the former Imperial Army. Even with his strong leadership Hashio was confronted with challenges daily, such as coping with a sea of people. Dr. Hashio ended up living in a tent for five months. In all locations the menagerie was situated in a lot ranging only 6,600 to 13,200 square meters (1.6 to 3.2 acres). Into this small parcel tens of thousands of visitors poured in; one day in Niigata they recorded 90,000. Indira, the star feature who had been taught basic circus acts while in Tokyo, became ill in the early part of the tour and was unable to perform.

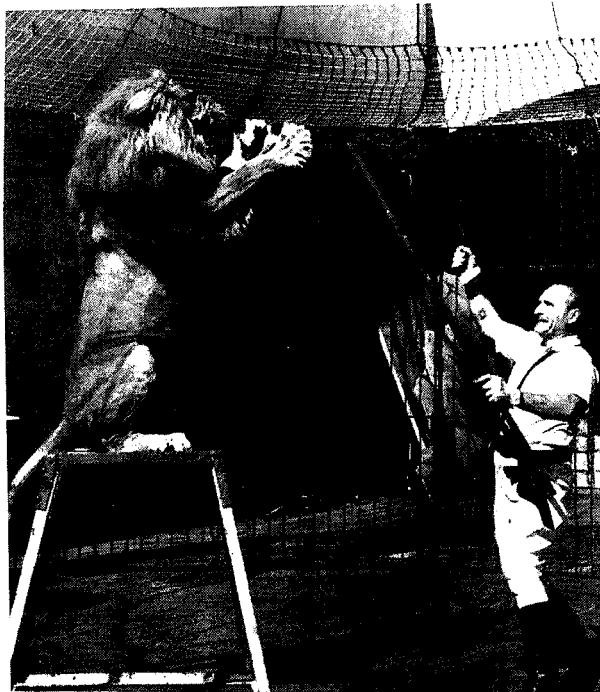
Indira was led from the train to the menagerie lot on foot. Surrounded by hordes of people, this turned into a parade in every city. The public's

heated enthusiasm was reaching its peak when they arrived at Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido, the northern main island on 7 July. Vast crowds raced to see the first elephant in Sapporo in 13 years. By this time Indira became thoroughly accustomed to the life on the road, stepping in and out of the freight car without hesitation. Behind the scenes, however, inversely proportionate to the public's excitement, fatigue descended on the beasts and men like thick rain clouds.

Hectic scheduling aside, Indira's presence carried significance of an international scale. Nehru's elephant represented a brilliant public relations coup for the newly-independent, proud nation, because she became a means to raise the status of India in the international community. At the menagerie sites a translated copy of Nehru's letter to the children of Japan was posted. Many of the visiting public had no idea who Harry S. Truman was, yet they knew the name of India's prime minister.

After the successful and memorable tour, the traveling menagerie returned to Ueno Zoo on 30 September. All total, it traveled 3,500 kilometers (2,200 miles), visited 17 cities and opened to the public for 111 days. The admission fees were nominal (10 yen for adults, five yen for children). Still, the public attendance of 2,386,902 (21,503 per day on average) brought in sizeable gate receipts. With a part of the revenue, a young female Asian elephant, named Jumbo, was purchased. Adding Hanako, a young Thai female that had arrived in 1949, Ueno Zoo now had three elephants.

During 1951, Ueno Zoo sent a series of traveling menageries to smaller communities in the surrounding areas and on remote islands off the Pacific coast. It was the Zoo's response to the citizens' requests from such communities, all under the jurisdiction of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the owner and operator of the Zoo. Indira stayed in Ueno; it was time for the younger elephants to take to the



American lion trainer Dick Clemens was invited to perform for the seventieth anniversary of Ueno Zoo in Tokyo in the spring of 1952. Tokyo Zoological Park Society photo.

road, always accompanied by a lion. In the meantime Ueno Zoo (opened on 20 March 1882) geared up for a major undertaking, its seventieth anniversary, to be celebrated in a series of special events from 10 March through 31 May 1952.

For this occasion, American circus lion trainer Dick Clemens was invited to take part in the celebration. Clemens, then 51-years old, Anna Gates and eight lions began their journey in San Francisco. While they were sailing toward Honolulu a cub was born, and appropriately named Pacific. The group arrived at Ueno Zoo on 17 March, and two days later the show began (another cub was born on 24 March). Two staff members of the zoo joined Clemens as assistant trainers. Even in the capital city of Tokyo, opportunities for such entertainment were still rare. The lion show was received enthusiastically by large crowds.

After the commemorative events, Ueno Zoo organized another major traveling menagerie with Clemens' show as the feature attraction. The daily newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* became a partner again to do the

promotional work, while local governments en route took up joint sponsorships. The animal inventory increased considerably, compared to the original. The list of 37 animals in 20 species included six show lions, a black leopard, a Hamadryas baboon, four monkeys (two each of Japanese and Formosan rock), a dromedary camel, a boa constrictor, a monitor lizard and Jumbo the elephant. On 8 June 1952, the international team of Japanese and Americans took the animals on the road.

They returned to Ueno Zoo on 1 November after touring 16 cities and communities. These included a run in Sapporo on the Maruyama Zoo grounds from 31 July through 8 August. The triumphant performance

by lions, in a sense, embodied the nostalgic return of Ueno Zoo to this northern city. It was in Sapporo that two years earlier, the overwhelming popularity of the traveling menagerie provided citizens momentum for the final push on the city government to build a zoo.

The phenomenal success of the traveling menageries by Japan's leading zoo brought about unexpected and certainly unintended results. First, the enormous popularity of animals paved the way for a zoo construction boom, which spread into medium to small cities, for example Sapporo. It came at the time when economic recovery was beginning to take hold, allowing municipalities to consider expensive projects such as constructing and operating zoos.

Another factor behind the mushrooming zoos was democracy, a long-forgotten system of governance. Like world peace, democracy was precious, transplanted under an exotic halo by the charismatic General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (Japan was still under Allied occupation). The newly-organized democratic society enabled ordinary citizens to express their voices in the political system. In some cases, grass-root campaigns resulted in the construction of zoos, as seen in the example of Sapporo.

Secondly, Ueno Zoo's success proved lucrative and spawned a re-emergence of commercially operated, large-scale traveling menageries. The miracle of the 1960s, during which Japan achieved its stunning economic rise, was yet to come. But the economy was already moving at an accelerating pace, allowing the populace to enjoy more leisure activities. Citizens' thirst for entertainment provided fertile ground, and menageries delivered trainloads of beasts from far-away lands into their backyard.

### Exotic Cargoes Rushing Ashore

During the heyday of the traveling menageries in the mid 1950s there were four major collections touring the country: Sekai Dobutsu Haku (translates to World Animal Expo; a.k.a. Nippon Zoo) and circus-related operations, Shibata, Kinoshita and Arita.<sup>16</sup> Owned by Shikataro Taruya, World Animal Expo was by far the largest.

In the years following the war he toured the country showing a few animals, such as an alligator, from one tourist destination to the other. Taruya saw an opportunity in the rising trend of traveling menageries, starting his own in 1951. Under joint sponsorships with local governments, boards of education or even "the patronage of the Ministry of Education" the business went well.

There were three major wild animal importers in the country then, one each in Tokyo, Yokohama and Kobe. They rode on the crest of rampant demand by menagerie operators, resulting in the "Wild West" scenes of massive importations of an unprecedented magnitude. Wave after wave of exotic animals were unloaded at major ports, and many were sent to Taruya.

In one account<sup>17</sup> Taruya had an impressive line-up for a run in Tokyo, including: five gorillas, two African elephants, 22 Asian elephants, 40 giraffes (15 of them died in the quaran-

tine facility in Yokohama), twenty-plus zebras and several hippos. They chartered 222 (50 in another account) freight cars; wherever they went, crowds formed long lines from early morning. As for animals, the accurate inventory remains a mystery. To visualize the scope of the animal collection, we will use an undated brochure of this menagerie which has a list of "the main collection."

On the list are 326 mammals, 146 birds and four reptiles, or a total of 476 specimens. The species count is far from complete. For example, one would be clueless at "an assortment of 50 monkeys" with no information of the species. At times, as was the practice by zoos and circuses, the descriptions of species were vague. Generic terms such as "8 zebras," "3 oryx" or "2 pythons" are used, but each contains several different species. Likewise oryx, waterbuck and kudu were listed with no detail. Also problematic is "8 penguins." From a small grainy photo two of them appear to be African or Humboldt's; both are warm climate species but not Antarctic, as advertised.

To use rough estimates, it appears that there were 70 species of mammals, 40 species of birds and two species of reptiles. Based on my personal observation these probably rep-

Preparing for the show at Ueno Zoo, Dr. Tadamichi Koga, zoo director (second from left) and trainer Dick Clemens (third from left) inspect the lions. Tokyo, spring of 1952. Mary Clemens photo.



resented nearly the entire inventory. Numbers, however, do not tell the whole story. The collection was quite formidable. Some highlights:

Primates: 107 including three lowland gorillas, one orangutan, five chimpanzees, two white-handed gibbons, six Hamadryas baboons, four chacma baboons, two drills, two mandrills, two DeBrazza's monkeys, four patas monkeys, two spider monkeys, 17 capuchins, two marmosets.

Large cats: 56 including 34 lions, 12 tigers, seven leopards (one of them black), two pumas, one cheetah.

Bears: 14 including five polar bears, two brown bears, two Syrian bears, two Himalayan bears, three black bears (Japanese).

Pachyderms: 24 including 15 Asian elephants, two African elephants, two rhinoceroses (believed to be black), three Nile hippopotami and two tapirs (believed to be South American).

Ungulates: 61 including five giraffes, five wart hogs, three peccaries, three sika deer, two yaks, two water buffalo, one American bison, two elands, two nilgai, three oryx, one kudu, two blackbucks, two Grevy zebras, eight zebras.

Other mammals: One striped hyena, two spotted hyenas, four gray wolves, one caracal, one ocelot, one jackal, 10 California sea lions, two fur sea lions, two giant anteaters, six agoutis, two pacas.

Birds: 146 including eight ostriches, two rheas (probably greater), two emus, four cassowaries, two mute swans, three black swans, eight penguins, five roseate pelicans, four Andean condors, three vultures, one golden eagle, two caracaras, three secretary birds, four toco toucans, seven red-breasted toucans, five keel-billed toucans, two curasows, seven blue peafowl, four green peafowl, 10 bleeding-heart doves, one snowy owl, two red-crowned cranes, one white-naped crane, two sarus cranes, two hooded cranes and 10 crowned cranes.

In some accounts the World Animal Expo



claimed to hold 10,000 animals in 4,000 species. Maintaining such a huge number of animals requires an enormous foundation of infrastructure, a daunting task even for top-notch zoos equipped with trained staff and a well-oiled organization. The zoo well known for a large collection (particularly in pre-World War II era) was located in the former West Berlin. "In 1939, the Berlin Zoo was the most important in the world with a collection of about 4000

mammals and birds in some 1400 species."<sup>18</sup> This meant that the zoo had a wealth of animal housing, exhibit and mechanical service facilities, supported by a team of experts including veterinary and animal care. Keeping a huge collection alive itself creates daily challenges; the additional hardship of frequent transport on a permanent basis would multiply all conceivable difficulties. The above figure of 10,000 animals represents a case of gross exaggeration.

The World Animal Expo reached its peak around 1954 and 1955. At that time its animal collection was said to have surpassed that of Ueno Zoo, the undisputed top-ranking zoo in Japan. It was a questionable claim in terms of exact numbers of species and specimens (Ueno's 1955 animal inventory included 319 mammals in 105 species and 975 birds in 177 species.) However, the claim sounded convincing as for rarity and sheer public-drawing power of popular mammals, particularly the species that were "firsts." The World Animal Expo made history by introducing the following to the Japanese public for the first time;<sup>19</sup> A pair of lowland gorillas, estimated to be three years of age, arrived at Haneda Airport on 23 December 1954, and made a debut in Kyushu on New Year's day of the following year. (Ueno Zoo did not receive their first gorillas until 17 November 1957.) Three more juveniles joined them in January 1956. The first of the two African elephants, a young male, arrived at the port of Moji in March 1953; he died in January 1956 during



India's walk from a train station to the menagerie site turned into a parade in every city. In Akita, August 1950. Tokyo Zoological Park Society photo.

a Tokyo run. A northern elephant seal arrived at Yokohama on 31 March 1955, but died in about half a month. Another male arrived during the same year. Possibly there were more first imports, a challenging subject of study for circus and zoo historians in Japan.

The aforementioned brochure listed three exotic animal acts: A mixed act with three lions, two polar bears and three Syrian bears by Hagenbeck, and a lion act from England. Also, for years veteran American animal trainer Mable Stark worked with them. The famed lady started in 1908 and had worked tigers for 35 years. In August 1954 Miss Stark returned to Los Angeles after 10 months in Japan, and was planning to rejoin the show in October. She pronounced the tour "the best job I ever had in show business." While in Japan she had a personal maid and private car. Her meals were served on a tray in her state room.<sup>20</sup>

On a personal note, while in high school and college the author visited traveling menageries whenever opportunities arose. It was in the 1950s in southern Japan. With the typical naivete of a high school kid I once commented to Miss Stark that her tigers were "tame." With a smile she looked at me straight, and said that they were trained, not tame. Later, in the waning period of the

World Animal Expo, while in college I briefly worked as a cage boy. I was amazed how Miss Stark maintained personal integrity and pride in her old age, impeccably dressed for every show in the deteriorating conditions of the menagerie.

Popularity of traveling menageries, kick-started by Ueno Zoo and promoted by commercially operated counterparts, continued to encourage city fathers and citizens across the country to build zoos. This led to the zoo construction boom that swept Japan in the 1950s. Between February 1953 and November 1958, 19 zoos and related facilities, both tax-supported and private, opened (three of them later closed).<sup>21</sup> Ironically, the births of zoos signaled the distant tolling of the bell; the demise of large-scale traveling menageries was inevitable. Behind the scenes, other factors hastened the process.

The World Animal Expo, like others in those days, was characterized by substandard animal husbandry. Shipping crates were often used as night quarters for animals, and the pool for hippopotami was no more than a metal bath tub. There was no big top as in circuses, and the animal acts were performed in outdoor arenas. For the operators animals were expendable and inadequate care led to high mortality. Combined with mortalities from other traveling menageries of the 1950s, they would add up to a spectacularly wasteful use of wildlife resources, including rare species, condensed into a brief period. It was also a great monetary loss. Protests from overseas were not uncommon. Ueno Zoo received complaints because the import permit application for the aforementioned gorillas was filed for "a Tokyo zoo," as if animals were destined for Ueno.

"Boys, go to town and have fun," said the boss and at the end of the day. The menagerie operators would dole out wads of cash to workers, most of them young men. On the surface the business seemed flourishing. Taruya's business practices,

however, were typified by spending at will without keeping accurate accounting, and a reckless management style that eventually ran him to the ground. Unable to keep paying the ground rent, he began to drop off animals to clear debts. Municipal officials, stuck with abandoned animals, contacted Ueno Zoo, inquiring about the monetary value of the animals or asking what to do with them.

By the time the 1960s rolled in, the large-scale traveling menageries were on their way out. The World Animal Expo transferred the small number of remaining animals, including gorillas and hippopotami, to a permanent exhibit facility in Beppu, one of the best-known hot-spring resorts in Japan. This, however, was not the last nail in the coffin of traveling menageries. For instance, another operation, also named the World Animal Expo, emerged in the 1970s.<sup>22</sup>

To commemorate the sister-city relationship between Sapporo and Munich, Germany, a menagerie was opened in Sapporo, featuring 200 animals in 50 species including elephants, lions and giraffes. In the center lay a circular show arena measuring 10 meters in diameter (33 feet) and three meters high (10 feet). A German animal trainer conducted a 40-minute show which included a single animal act with a black leopard, a mixed act (lion, leopard and jaguar) with a finale of tug of war between two tigers and visitors. However, all the attractions failed to increase attendance and the menagerie closed with a large debt. To pay off the debt, traveling continued with a reduced animal collection. A full tour up and down the archipelago took a month and a half, moving in 20 large trucks. The animal trainer returned to Germany in the spring of 1974, replaced with a chimpanzee trainer from Mexico.

A drama unfolded in the summer of 1975, which illustrated the dwindling viability of traveling menageries. In Naha, Okinawa, a menagerie from the mainland went bankrupt and its operators skipped town. Left behind was an army of animals including elephant, gorilla, chimpanzee and hippopotamus. In desperation the *Okinawa Times*, the

newspaper which sponsored the menagerie, requested that a small local zoo accept them as an emergency measure (very little was reported about this drama). Although more than half of the animals died after settling in at the zoo, the abandoned animals were a boost for this small facility.<sup>23</sup>

Today, traveling menageries are not quite extinct. With much reduced collections they are surviving, opening their businesses in the backyards of kindergartens and on department store rooftops (department stores in Japan are a unique cultural phenomenon, just as are large American shopping malls). In one estimate, there are 10 currently in operation.

However, the days of large-scale traveling menageries are behind us. Television delivers images of wild animals into the living room. The public has access to a variety of animals, as Japan has more zoos than ever. The society's view on wild animals has also shifted, partly thanks to vocal anti-captivity movements by news-media savvy animal advocate groups. In addition, national and international import restrictions make it difficult to obtain animals, because of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an agreement between governments, entered in force in 1975. The 1950s marked an era we will never witness again; the smell of sawdust, crowds applauding animal acts and row after row of exotic animals in crude cages live only in the history books.

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