

Let the Lions

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1997

Chicago Zoological Society



1997

Roar!

THE EVOLUTION OF BROOKFIELD ZOO

Andrea Friederici Ross

SAUK VALLEY CC
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The purpose of this book is to document the history of Brookfield Zoo and to communicate the Society's evolution and mission to a broad audience. To the best knowledge of the author and the Society, all of the information contained in this book is accurate.

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A close-up photograph of a brown bear's face, showing its thick, textured fur in shades of brown and tan. The bear's eye is partially visible on the left side, and its mouth is slightly open, showing a pink tongue. The background is a light, sandy or concrete surface.

CHAPTER SIX

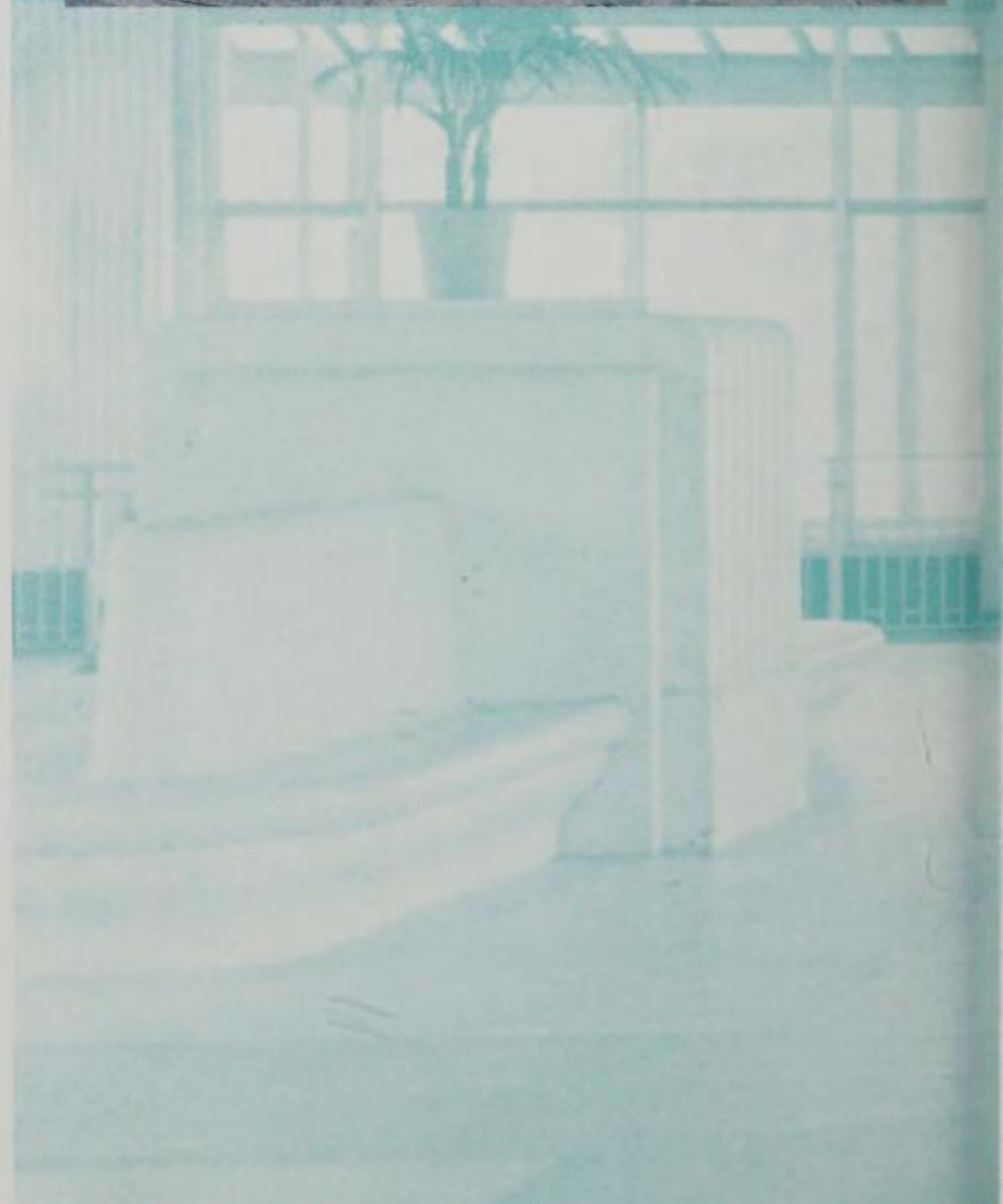
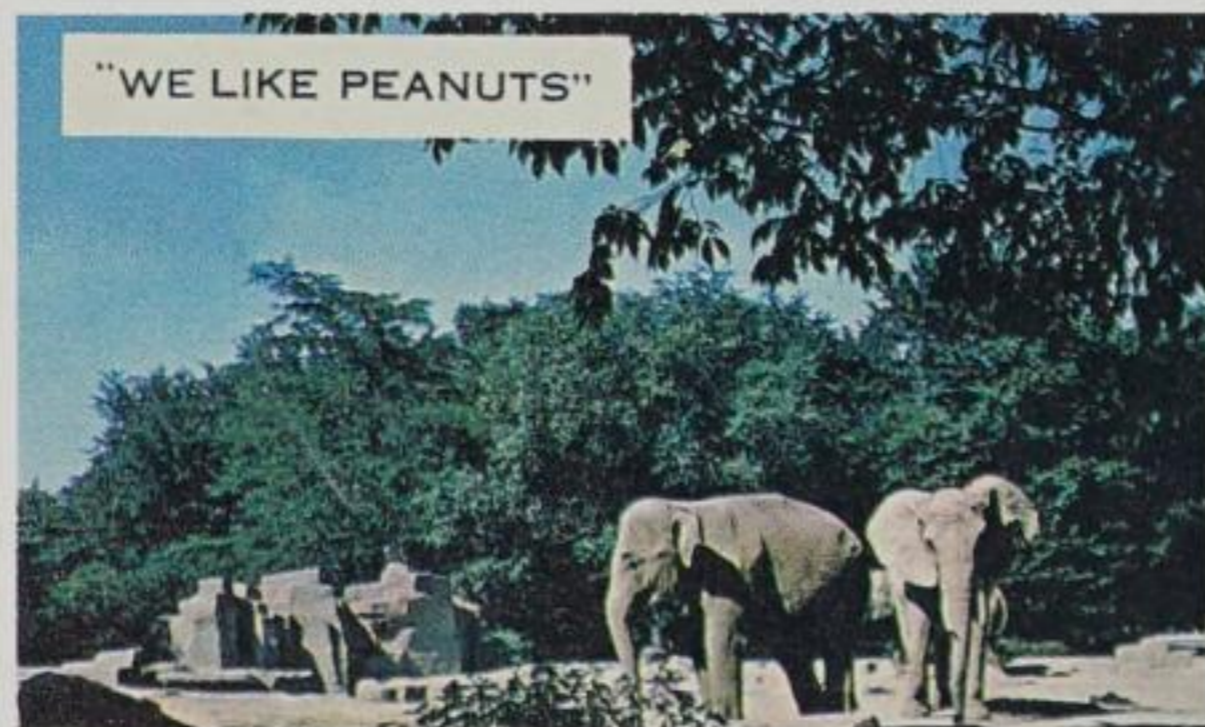
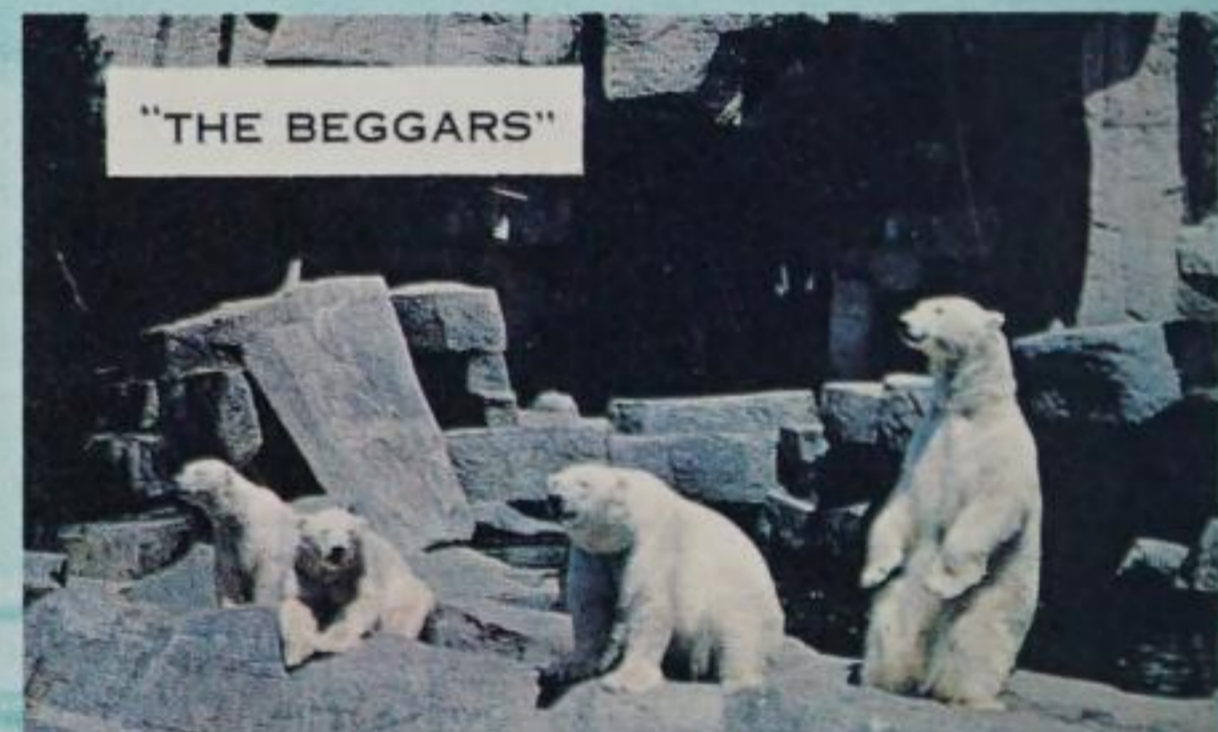
The War Years

(1940-1945)

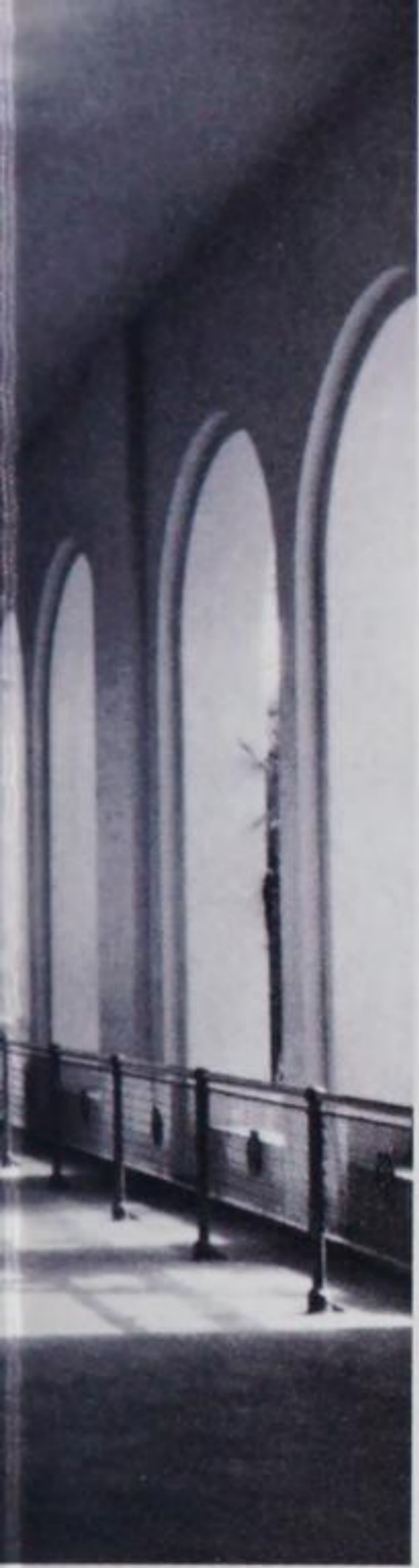


Making Ends Meet

Having survived public opposition in the 1920s and the Depression of the 1930s, Brookfield Zoo faced new challenges when World War II broke out. Attendance dropped by 500,000 in 1939, attributed to poor weather and the possibility that people were staying home to hear news on the radio. With revenues dropping off and the future uncertain, a halt was called on new construction and efforts were made to increase attendance in new ways. Free music and guide services were offered during the summer of 1940, and a publicity firm was hired briefly to increase awareness of the zoo.



Left: Even in its early days, Reptile House displayed its animals in standard enclosures with "cage furniture" such as branches, rocks, and live plants.



The situation only got worse throughout 1940 and 1941, with fewer visitors and little hope for immediate improvement. The Federal Income Tax Law of 1941 required that an admission tax of 3 cents be collected on all paid admissions and on all persons admitted free on 25 cent days, thereby increasing the admission rates without benefit to the zoo. A bad wind and hail storm later that year and the loss of keepers to the war effort further depressed morale.

Also that year, Ziggy, the Indian elephant famous for stirring things up, did it once again, in a big way. Elephant keeper George "Slim" Lewis was about to bring him in for the day when the giant pachyderm suddenly turned on his keeper.

Lewis later described the attack in *I Loved Rogues: The Life of an Elephant Tramp*. "He whirled on me in a flash. His lashing trunk struck me full force and the blow threw me nearly fifty feet. I landed on my stomach. Before I could scramble to my feet, he was on top of me. His trunk seized me by a leg and he pulled me, face down, beneath his head. I tried to turn over on my back, hoping that if I could face him, he might respond to a command. As I twisted to my side, his tusks grazed my chest and my back and thudded a foot into the ground.

"He jerked up his head and the tusks poised above me. His trunk was curled over, outside the right tusk and around underneath to hold my legs. His tusks were close-set, and there wasn't much room between them, but I managed to twist into that space as they plunged into the ground a second time. Ziggy stabbed again and again. I kept wriggling, and by some miracle, he missed piercing my body. If my nickname hadn't been Slim by rights, I wouldn't be telling the story.

"Once he came so close he pinned my right arm to the ground, and I thought it was coming off. Incongruously for a man still under a bull elephant intent on killing him, I thought, 'How am I going to make a living with one arm gone?'



Above: Visitors are dwarfed by the spaciousness of the free-flight display in Aquatic Bird House and by the building itself.

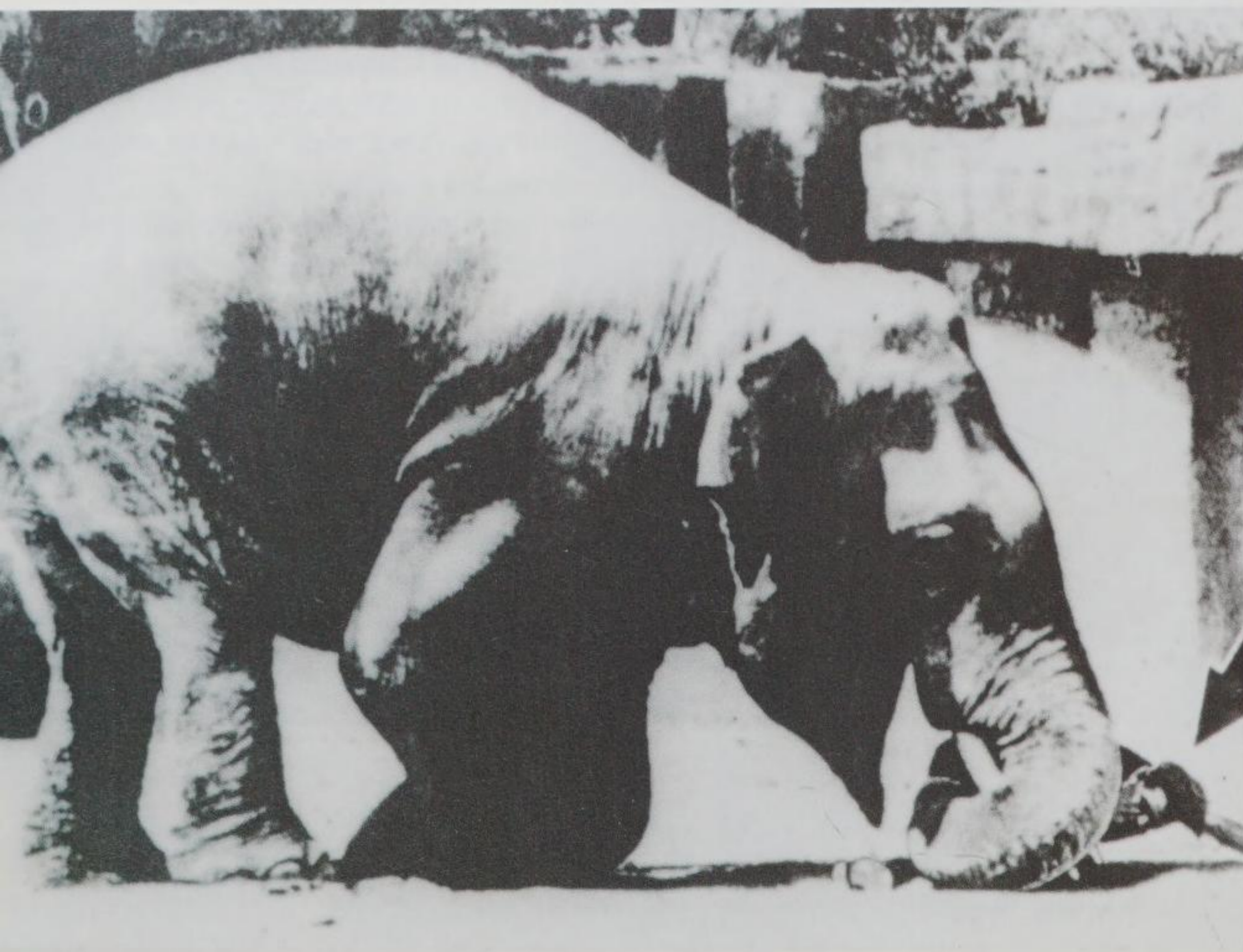
“Then he got my right leg in his mouth and tried to chew it off. As he worked my foot back toward his great, grinding molars, he had to relax his mouth for another pull, and I jerked the leg free. I didn’t see how I could possibly continue to escape the thrusts, pinned down as I was, and half my mind was screaming, ‘Go on, get it over with.’ The rest was saying, ‘Keep trying.’”

“I closed my eyes as the tusks descended again, but when I opened them, I was still there and the ivory shafts were buried in the hard ground. Ziggy had thrown his weight into them so hard it took him a moment to pull free. In that tiny interval, I finally managed to turn over so I faced him. As he raised his head, I grabbed one of his ears and he pulled me to my feet. Plastered to the side of his head, I gouged for his eye with my free hand. At the same time, I shouted at him.

Ziggy must have thought he had done the job. He was so startled that I could still fight back, he straightened up and stood still.

“I turned away from Ziggy and went to the moat, walking so he wouldn’t get the idea I was in retreat and be encouraged to charge me again. I jumped into the moat and climbed out the other side. At the fence, I turned to look back at Ziggy. He strolled over to where the hook and my hat had fallen when he first struck me. He picked up the hat, twirled it in his trunk for a second and threw it into the moat. Then he did the same thing with the hook. It was a nice bit of grandstanding.”

After the attack, Lewis visited Director Bean in his office to beg that Ziggy not be destroyed. Coming from a circus background, Lewis was used to unruly



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Above: In 1941, Ziggy the Indian elephant violently turned on his keeper, “Slim” Lewis. A passerby managed to snap this photo of the attack.

animals being killed, and he pled for Ziggy’s survival with tears running down his cheeks. Director Bean decided that Ziggy would be pardoned but, as a safety precaution, that the elephant would be kept only in an indoor enclosure from then on. Later that same day, the indomitable Lewis went back into the yard with Ziggy and, with the help of another elephant, brought him inside. Decades later, Ziggy’s circumstances would change the way these animals are managed in captivity.

Ziggy’s attack was one of the events that set a somber tone for the zoo. At the 1942 annual meeting, Stanley Field reported, “I think one can only look forward to the year 1942 and the years that are to follow with considerable trepidation. The trustees and Executive Committee will have to exercise much care to maintain what is there now and to keep the park open.”

During the same meeting, Director Bean reported that due to men enlisting in the armed forces or seeking war-related employment, “more employees were lost by resignation during the last year than in all previous years since the park opened.”

One happy event does stand out: the October 1941 birth of the first black rhinoceros born in captivity. John McCutcheon recalled how he heard the news. “Once in the small hours of night our telephone rang,” he said. “This is never a pleasant sound. Brookfield was calling. ‘There’s a baby rhino!’ came Robert Bean’s excited voice. ‘It’s hardly twenty minutes old. There’s never been one born in captivity before. I want to tell the committee!’” McCutcheon decided to wait until morning to share the good news with the Executive Committee.



Above and left: In 1941, Mary the black rhino (above) gave birth to Georgie-Joe (left), the first of the species born in captivity. It was a momentous event considering black rhinos are endangered. A sign (inset) announced the grand birth.

The successful birth of the black rhino to parents Pharaoh and Mary helped mark the Chicago Zoological Park as a first-class zoo, not just in respect to exhibitry, but also in breeding efforts.

Rhinos notwithstanding, Field's prediction unfortunately came true. In 1943, attendance dropped to 669,769 from 2,089,223 in 1938. Earned revenues fell accordingly, hitting \$166,000 in 1943, having reached \$290,000 in 1938. The thinking at the zoo was of sheer maintenance and existence rather than growth and improvement. Excess animals were sold, decreasing the amount of food and keepers needed and bringing in a much-needed source of cash. In 1943, the Society raised \$23,315 selling animals, and no new animals were purchased. The practice of selling animals, common in zoos at the time, was soon discontinued except to properly accredited and responsible organizations.

At Director Bean's suggestion, Small Mammal House was closed in 1943 due to difficulty in securing and retaining keepers. Reportedly, the closing saved the zoo about \$6,000 a year in food and maintenance. Many experienced keepers left to join the military or to find higher-paying jobs in the war industry. There were missile factories and other war-effort jobs in neighboring communities, and they paid considerably more than the zoo. Bean and the trustees tried to keep up by continuously raising pay scales, but they couldn't afford to keep pace.

"On July 1, 1941, the approximate date on which the first man left the Park to enter the armed services, the Society employed 32 men for the care of the animals," Bean reported. "In the three years since that date, 51 men have been engaged—some staying a year and others only a few hours. Today there are 26 men on the keepers payroll—only seven of whom were with the Society prior to July 1, 1941. Most of the new men didn't know a hawk from a handsaw when they came, and I regret I must add that many didn't when they left."

MIGHTY PHARAOH

Former animal collector Walter C. Schulz recalled the capture of the male black rhino, Pharaoh, "...which I followed for 17 days on the foot of the Olessimingo mountain, 90 miles west of Arusha towards lake Manyara. A scratch caused by a lion had injured its anus which a young newly arrived Veterinary declined to operate on, advising to destroy the animal and catch another one. Poor Vet, he had no idea that the capture of a rhino in those days was not an easy task, and was only to be achieved by months-long hunting in the veld, bearing all hardships on a never-give-in basis and constant fight for survival for men and animal alike. I doped the young rhino bull, disinfected the area, repositioned the intestine and stitched up the rectum. The result: this rhino became the father of the first rhino calf born in a zoo."

HIPPOS FOR SALE

In January 1943, the *Chicago Daily Times* featured an article called "Wanna Buy a Hippopotamus?" about the practice of selling animals during World War II.

"Unless you have an outsize bathtub, you probably won't be interested, but if you want to pick up a pair of hippopotami at bargain rates, your opportunity is knocking out at the gates of the Brookfield Zoo. Only \$4,500 will take away Bebe and Toto, the hefty hippos aged 4 and 3 respectively, whom Robert Bean, assistant director of the zoo yesterday posted for sale along with 5 black bears, 30 baboons, one wildebeest, one hartebeest, one eland antelope and two giraffes.

"Though gasoline rationing has made rather an ugly dent in zoo attendance, Bean said the animals are being sold primarily because they're duplicates.

"A Chicago banker wanted a bear—to eat. And a local firm selling game wanted a bunch of bears—also to be sold to eat. Bean made short work of them, 'Our animals are NOT being sold to be destroyed.'

"The 30 baboons, whom no one has shown any marked interest in acquiring, will sell for \$25 apiece, if the buyer takes the lot. Individual baboons run higher. The eland antelope and the hartebeest will go, if they go at all, for \$600 apiece, and the wildebeest for about that sum."



Tire restrictions and gas rationing didn't help attendance problems, even eliminating the ever-present school groups from the zoo. The children's polio epidemic that hit Chicago in 1943 further discouraged parents and schools from bringing their little ones to a public place. The popular merry-go-round was temporarily shut down in 1943 to cut down on contact from child to child. A private citizen, a Mr. Harrison, even wrote a letter to the government suggesting that the zoo dismantle its cages and donate the scrap metal to the war effort—a suggestion that didn't get much consideration from the trustees. Taxes, even when collected, were not always passed immediately to the zoo, creating further cash-flow problems.

The zoo managed surprisingly well with all of these difficulties. Since the '30s, the zoo had farmed several acres in the northeast corner to provide fresh, cheap food for the animals. In 1943, 110 tons of green fodder, 13 tons of soybean hay, 12 tons of corn fodder, and 10,000 pounds of pumpkins were harvested on 23 acres of land. This self-sufficiency certainly helped the zoo weather the days of poor supplies.

"Naturally," Stanley Field reported in 1944, "there have been difficulties in obtaining the proper kind of food, such as for instance, the inability to get bananas for the monkeys and the substitution of sweet potatoes. There have naturally been many such changes—but no difficulties whatsoever have been experienced, nor is the health of the collection in any way impaired."

Circumstances eased a bit in 1944 when attendance increased by about 200,000. The trustees, ever hopeful, created a new exhibit wish list that included a gorilla house; a new barless panda grotto; renovations for Small Mammal House, which desperately needed better ventilation and more public space; new paddocks for some of the hoofed animals; and underground wiring for the telegraph and telephone wires. Also desirable but less pressing were a North American panorama, a small hospital, a library and meeting place, and buildings for hunting trophies and animal art. The trustees knew all they could do was dream—new construction wasn't possible at the time—but at least they would be prepared if the situation improved.

When possible throughout the war years, the Board of Trustees set aside extra money in a contingency fund, not knowing how long the war would last or what the future would bring for the zoo. By 1945, the fund had grown to nearly \$500,000, a testimony to the Board's frugality and careful planning.



Left: The zoo lost many of its workers, including much of its grounds crew, to World War II.

Below: Commissary manager Frank Snyder (right) oversaw distribution of animal meals, including zoo-grown hay, corn, and pumpkins.



Ed Steiner

"TIRELESS" ZOOKEEPING

In 1942, the Associated Press filed the following report, "Gorillas Join Tire Complainers," about how even the animals were affected by rationing during World War II.

"Chicago, July 15—The scrap-rubber drive hit the gorilla house at Brookfield Zoo. The three ancient tires which Suzette, Congo and Sultan toyed with for their diversion were removed from their cage while they slept. Came the dawn and Suzette, Congo and Sultan obviously were piqued. The keeper deemed it unwise to romp with them until they rise above the pinch of personal sacrifice."

A Tragic Loss

Just as the war situation was looking a little more hopeful and attendance and revenues were beginning a slow but steady upward climb, the zoo was rocked by tragedy. On September 5, 1945, Director Ed Bean was returning from a vacation spent with his sister when his car skidded on loose gravel. The car turned over three times before coming to a stop against a fence. Bean, helped from the car and taken to the hospital, said he felt "a little dazed." Later, however, doctors discovered he had suffered a concussion. The 69-year-old zoo director died shortly thereafter.

With the shock waves still reverberating, the Board of Trustees considered the question of a successor. Everyone knew that Ed Bean, who had been director for 18 years, would be a hard act to follow. The zoo had prospered during his watch. He had fostered good relations with his active Board and created a family feeling among staff, his connections in the zoo world had allowed for many unique animal transactions, and under his watchful eye, the Chicago Zoological Park had gradually come to be. Bean had helped build the zoo into a leading zoological institution.

As assistant director since 1927, Robert Bean was the natural choice to follow his father as director. In 1945, the trustees appointed him acting director, a position he held for two years until he was officially made director. The reluctance to immediately appoint the junior Bean as full-fledged director signified some reservations the Board had about his capabilities. Although exceedingly knowledgeable about animals and zoos, obviously intelligent, well-respected in the field, and a quick study, Robert had one flaw the trustees worried about: he had a drinking problem.

And so a new chapter began for the zoo. World War II ended, Ed Bean was gone, and the zoo moved on.



In 1978, another zoo favorite celebrated her 45th birthday by literally attacking her “birthday cake.” Caught near Mt. Meru in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Mary the rhino had arrived in 1935 with her mate, Pharaoh. She captured headlines in 1941 when she gave birth to Georgie-Joe, the first black rhino born in captivity. (Mary and Pharaoh produced Robert R. three years later.) She was almost as old as the zoo.

Mary’s birthday was an event. WGN-Radio’s Wally Phillips devoted 20 minutes of his morning show to singing songs to Mary, a huge birthday sign was strung up in her enclosure, and about 400 visitors and staff donned party hats and serenaded the grande dame. Mary hammed it up, several times circling and charging her cake, which was made up of apples, bananas, oranges, grass, onions, and yogurt, her favorite foods. Acting more like a two-year-old than her age, she ended up with much of the treat on her face.

Birthdays aside, every day seemed to bring another incident. One involving an ostrich highlights the vigilance keepers must maintain every day. “The rule here is that when you take a padlock off a door, you close the door, hang the padlock on a wire, and click it shut,” said reptile curator Ray Pawley. “An ostrich was in Aquatic Bird House’s outside flight cage. A keeper set the padlock down for an instant, took two or three steps into the enclosure, and then remembered she had to click the lock shut. When she turned, she saw the lock in mid-air. The ostrich had grabbed it and flipped it up in the air to catch it and swallow it. The keeper made a lunge for the bird and grabbed it around its neck. She felt the padlock slide past her fist into the ostrich’s stomach.

“We had to take the bird to the hospital. The veterinarian made a hook out of a coat hanger and, kind of like unlocking a car door from the outside, slipped the hook into the throat of the ostrich, snagged the padlock, and pulled it out.”

Next door, in Perching Bird House, two new faces—newborn grey-headed kingfishers—made history as they were the first of their species to be hatched in captivity. Named Tittle and Tattle, the fledglings had to be hand-raised because their parents stopped feeding them. The Bird Department staff took to the task, regularly feeding the babies bits of meal, crickets, and tiny pieces of meat. “Looks like we have two more celebrities at Brookfield Zoo,” commented curator of birds Dennis DeCoursey at the time.

Another incident involved a turkey vulture housed in Children’s Zoo. Although wing-wounded, she was able to flap her primary feathers and coast a few feet. One day, she somehow caught a gust of wind and flew right out of Children’s Zoo. Quite the event for her, except that she landed in the grizzly bear enclosure.

Amazingly, the bird intimidated the mammoth grizzly bears! She flapped her wings, hissed, rushed at them, and carried on so tremendously that the bears didn’t know what to do. Eventually, staff were able to entice the bears into their indoor enclosure and rescue the brave turkey vulture from the outside yard. It was certainly an unusual standoff.



Above: A 1978 birthday party was just like any other, except that the guest of honor was Mary, the 45-year-old black rhino.

Right: The zoo was the first to successfully breed grey-headed kingfishers. Keepers were forced to hand-raise the birds to save them.



Keeping the Veterinarians Busy

Animal happenings continued apace. The early 1980s were particularly busy for the veterinarians, with all kinds of unusual medical procedures: a rhinoceros pedicure of sorts, an elephant tooth extraction, emergency polar bear surgery, and dual hip replacements for a gorilla.

Brooke, a female black rhino, developed cracks in the toenails of both rear feet. If left unattended, such separations can lead to infection and lameness. Brooke was anesthetized and epoxy was laid in the cracks. The procedure had often been performed on horses but never before on a rhino. In the end, it was a relatively simple operation, lasting only about a half hour, and Brooke's problems were solved.

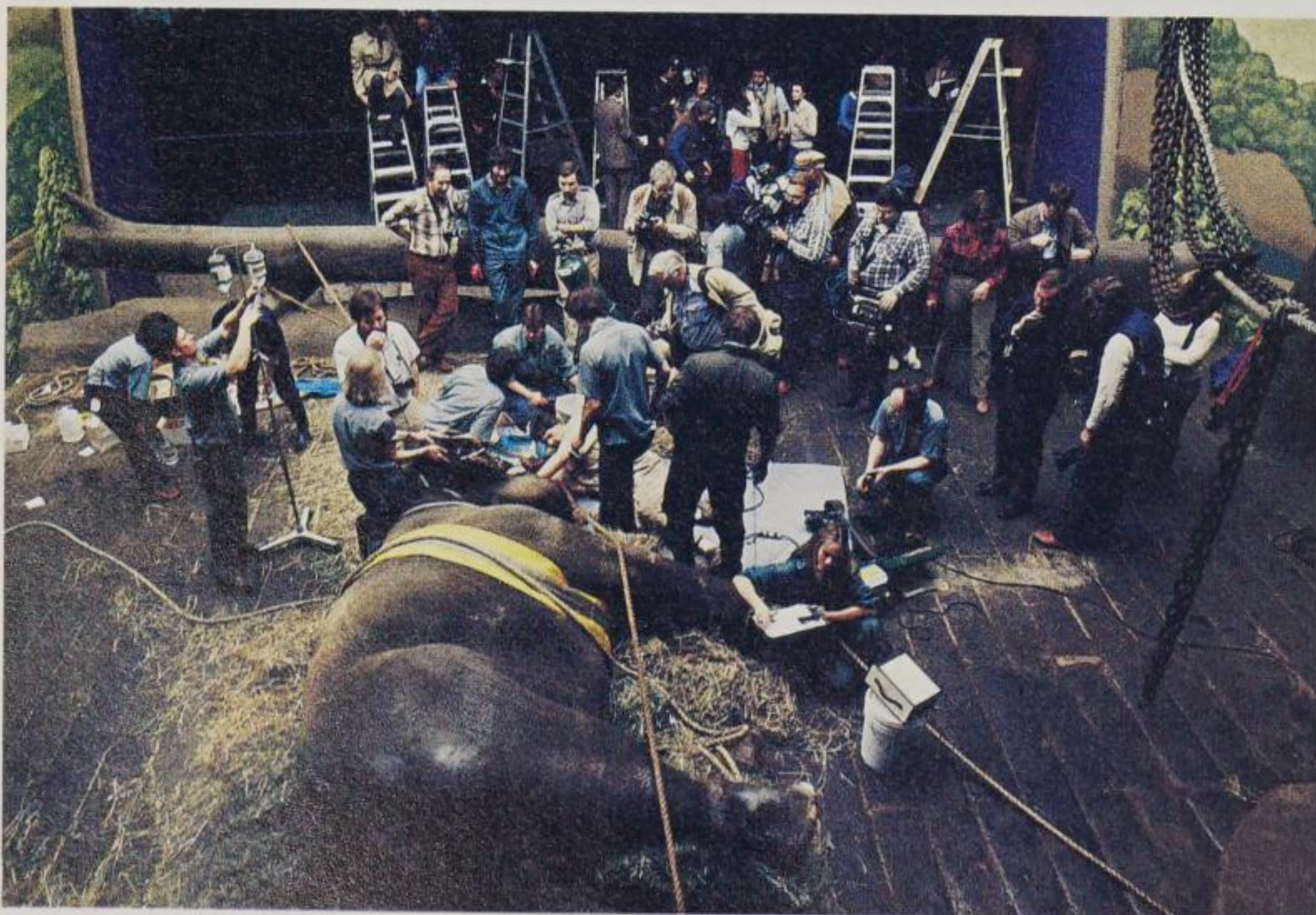
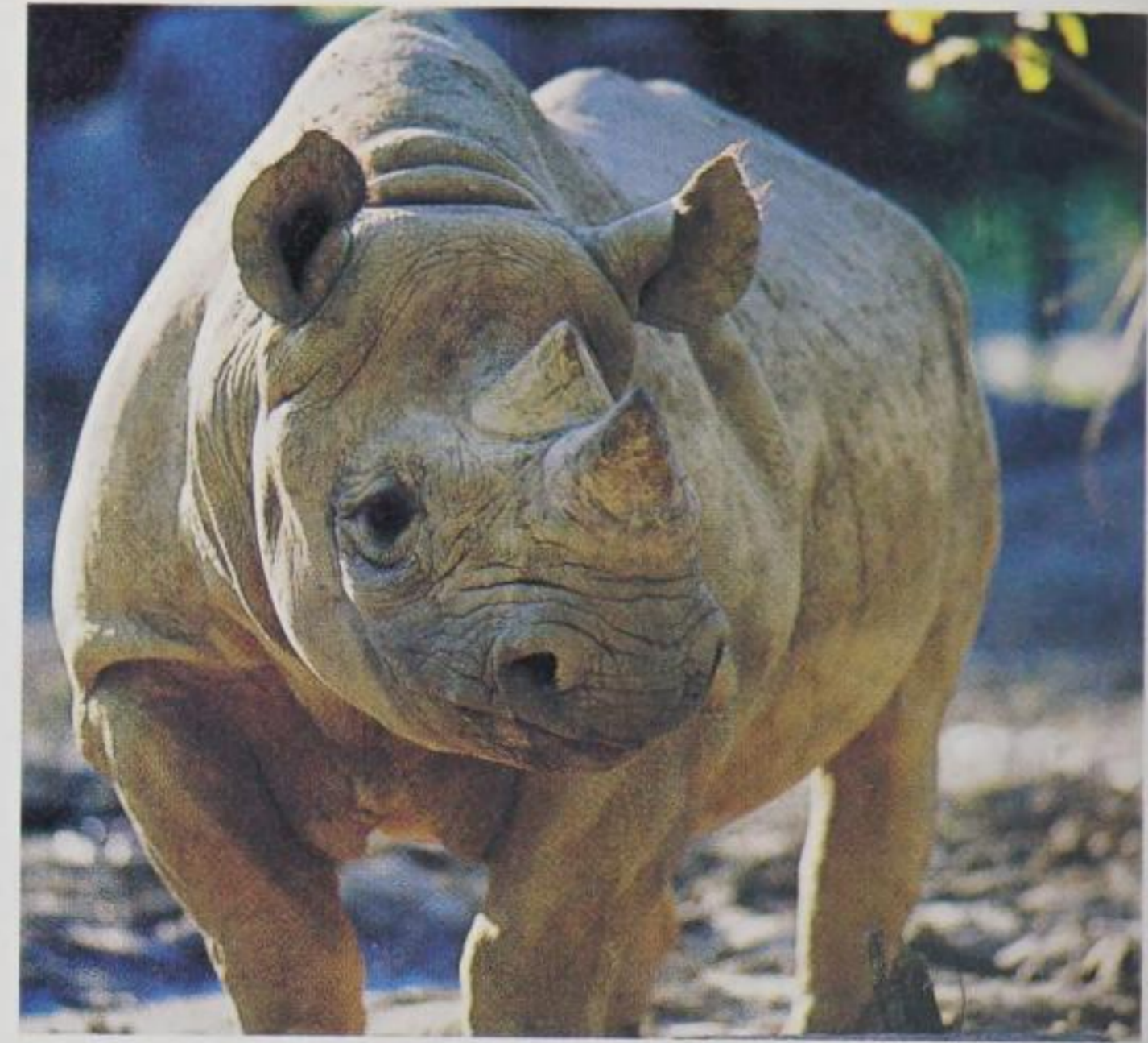
Babe the elephant's tooth extraction was more involved. Staff noticed that the 36-year-old pachyderm was losing weight—about 500 pounds, it turned out. The culprit, they discovered, was "malocclusion," in which upper and lower teeth don't meet correctly. If an elephant can't properly grind its food, it could starve.

Although tooth extractions had been performed on elephants before, this particular surgery "was a toughie," according to Dr. Dave Fagan, the animal dentist from the San Diego Zoo who performed the operation. On March 24, 1982, Fagan went to work.

Excerpts from docent Terry Dudas' eyewitness account, published in the zoo's *Docent Journal*, tell the story. "By 10:00 a.m....Babe was isolated and injected with a 6cc dose of M-99, a morphine derivative so powerful that a drop could kill a human being. In all, Babe received 8½ ccs throughout the procedure. Next, Babe was assisted to her side by keepers who pulled on the stout ropes and the harness attached to her body. By 10:21 a.m., she was out like a light.

"The crew went into action transforming the elephant stall into an impromptu surgery. An IV was started in a vein behind Babe's right ear. Oxygen was administered through her trunk, and a monitor set up to track her heart rate. Babe's mouth was secured with ropes attached to both upper and lower jaws so that a good gape resulted." Fagan was able to extract the tooth by 11:25 a.m.

"Now the business of cleansing the wound was at hand," wrote Dudas. "Bucket after bucket of water was used to swab out the mouth and empty socket. It was close to noon when Dr.



Fagan finished the first portion of the operation. He changed his jumpsuit and returned to the job. After another in-mouth inspection, the dentist chose to remove only the crown of the lower tooth. Work began as before, and within 45 minutes the job was done."

Babe quickly rebounded from her surgery, happily gaining back the weight she had lost and probably not missing the six-pound, 12-ounce upper molar and one-pound, four-ounce crown.

Above: Brooke underwent surgery to fill in cracks in her feet. Her "pedicure" prevented lameness that usually strikes horses.

Left: Babe the elephant loses eight pounds of tooth as veterinarians remove a molar and a crown.