



# CHIMPANZOO: Research, Education and Enrichment

A PROGRAM OF



the Jane Goodall Institute

## BILL of Sequoia Park Zoo is Enjoying His Golden Years

*Kristina Casper-Denman*

In February of 2006 I was delighted to accept the invitation of zoo manager Gretchen Ziegler and keeper Jan Roletto of Sequoia Park Zoo to visit one of the oldest male chimpanzees in captivity. I had wanted to meet Bill who is well known in the zoo community, but I also wanted to check on how well Bill is doing for zoo visitors that wrote to ChimpanZoo and the Zoo worried that he lives alone in an older exhibit. As the Northwest Regional Coordinator for the Jane Goodall Institute's ChimpanZoo Program, I offered my experience with zoo chimpanzees to assess his behavior and his exhibit to see what changes might need to be made.

Bill was born in 1946 and has been living at Sequoia Park since 1957. He arrived in town with the Pollack Brothers Circus and immediately, the town fell in love with him. Bill was ready to retire and Sequoia Park was the ideal location for him. He and another male chimpanzee, Ziggy, lived at the zoo from 1966 until Ziggy's death in 1996. However, Ziggy and Bill were not ideally suited for living together because both had been hand-raised as infants and seemed to prefer the attention of humans rather than chimpanzees. Like many human raised chimpanzees, Bill and Ziggy had not acquired the social skills for living with other chimpanzees. Since Ziggy's death, Bill has adjusted nicely to living by himself. He appears to lead a happy life surrounded by the people who love him.

The Zoo has prepared an informational handout, describing Bill's history, his daily routine and facts about chimpanzees in general. The handout mentions that keeper Jan Roletto works with Bill on operant conditioning so he offers his arm for inspection during veterinary examinations rather than risk the dangers of being anesthetized. Bill's exhibit offers the complexity and space that he needs to live comfortably with multiple levels for climbing and resting, many places for food distribution, a wood chip substrate for comfort instead of concrete and a good view of his loving public that visit with him. There are always blankets, towels and other manipulable objects in the enclosure to stimulate his mind and to occupy his time when the public is not so entertaining. These objects may make the enclosure appear messy to the public but they are important and familiar objects for Bill. Bill has zoo manager Gretchen Ziegler and keeper Jan Roletto, who always look for new ways to make objects and activities to enrich his environment. Bill interacts with his keeper and the public, blowing raspberries to children who come to the zoo specifically to spend time with him. For Bill, these social interactions with humans are also social enrichment. Jan speaks with Bill constantly when she is in his presence, and he vocalizes to her as well. Despite being singly housed, his current situation shows him to be a well-adjusted chimpanzee.

Bill is the ultimate chimpanzee ambassador, showing the public that not only are these apes incredibly intelligent and creative (he is an accomplished artist) but they also have long memories. According to Gretchen Ziegler, Bill has a standing date with one visitor who brings fruit for him. Jan offers the fruit to Bill, and he and his visitor (seated on a bench opposite Bill) each eat their fruit, enjoying each other's company. From what I have seen, Bill is a healthy chimpanzee in every sense. It is a joy to visit the Sequoia Park Zoo both to see him and to see how much the community, including Gretchen Ziegler and Jan Roletto, truly love and appreciate him.



*Bill greets his public*



*Bill spooning up one of his favorite dishes, oatmeal delight  
Photos of Bill courtesy of Kristina Casper-Denman*

# BIOS

## Bonnie

Bonnie was born in the wild in approximately 1956. She is the oldest female at the Los Angeles Zoo and serves as a gentle caretaker to all of the chimpanzees. She has two daughters, Nan and Joanna, and two grandsons, Shaun and Glenn. Bonnie is also the great-grandmother of Jake and Jean.



## Gracie

Gracie was born at the Los Angeles Zoo in 1987 and from the beginning was the most precocious of the youngsters. She is very smart and is constantly getting into some sort of mischief. Gracie has one child, Jean, who like her mother is very clever and industrious.

## Jerrard

Jerrard was born at the Los Angeles Zoo in 1990 and is Gracie's younger brother. He, like his sister Gracie, has a very outgoing personality. Jerrard is bright, physically strong and was the group's previous dominant male.



## Joanna

Joanna, Bonnie's daughter, was born in 1985. She is a quiet girl who is very close to her mother, yet more assertive and self-assured than her older sister, Nan. Joanna is diabetic and has been trained to receive daily insulin injections.



## Yoshiko

Yoshiko, better known as Yoshi was born in 1990. She is a very pretty chimpanzee and a bit of a flirt. She also has a quiet side to her personality and is a good role model for baby brother Jake.

## Zoe

Zoe was born at Lion Country Safari in Florida in August 1999. She soon joined the community of the Los Angeles Zoo after her mother, a former research chimpanzee, rejected her. Zoe has become "one of the family" here at the zoo. She is confident and assertive and enjoys playing with best friends Jake and Jean.



## Judeo

**IN REMEMBRANCE** Judeo was a strong, confident leader with a gentle and sweet nature. He facilitated quick reconciliations between group members, was playful with both young and old, and was a loyal ally and friend. He will be greatly missed by chimpanzees and humans.



*Photos of Los Angeles Zoo chimpanzees courtesy of Tad Motoyama*

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