

Timed Summary

Interview with Rosemary Luxton

OH 788/2

Interviewer: Catherine Murphy

Date: 10th July 2006

Note: Key words shown in bold.

START TIME	SUMMARY
Disc 1	
00.00	Introduction
0.29	Rosemary Ann Wood explains that she was born on 9 th March 1934. She is now divorced.
0.54	Her first memory of the Zoo was seeing Lillian the elephant in 1937-38 when she went to the zoo on Sunday mornings with her father. He was a Professor of Botany at Adelaide University, and as an honorary member of the zoo, he was able to visit on Sunday mornings when it was closed to the public. He knew a lot about animals and plants. They used to feed the elephants carob beans which they loved.
2.17	Rosemary gives details about the elephants. When she returned to the zoo as an adult with her own children they fed carob beans to the elephant Samorn . Her mother had a house that was built in the 1850's and that was when the carob trees had been planted for the elephant.
3.43	Lillian was one of the small elephants. Rosemary had been brought up with Barbar books being read to her and because of that elephants were an important part of her childhood. Lillian used to pull a cart for children's rides, as did Samorn.
4.56	Rosemary recalls that an alligator (or crocodile) was killed in the children's Zoo disaster. It was white with age and was very old.
5.49	She remembers seeing a very small bird cage that held a sugar glider and neither she nor her father knew what it was. As a child she was impressed by the large animals.
7.00	She visited the Koala farm which was owned by Mr Minchin, and she went by train. It was located on the other side of the bridge where the university playing fields are now located. There were also sea lions which did performances.
8.05	Her father was an honorary member but was not on the Board of the Adelaide Zoo.
10.08	Rosemary states that the pink flamingo is the only animal still alive from her childhood – it is older than her.
10.32	She has early memories of a solitary baboon that obeyed her father's command: "Sarg, salute" and it would. It was a group animal and should not have been alone. When there was an outbreak of polio in 1939, she was not allowed to go to the Zoo.
12.24	She recalls that she went to the Zoo quite often during the war years.
12.54	She went overseas and visited zoos wherever she went, including London and Whipsnade and returned to Sydney after 20 years away.
13.20	When she came back to Adelaide in the 1970's it had changed a lot even though it still had barred enclosures but the enclosures were larger.

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15.52	Rosemary explains that after she divorced when she was 54, she re-joined the zoo for a new interest. She was still working but was able to take flexi leave to undertake Zoo Watches on the primates and the lyrebird.
16.32	She re-joined in 1989 and started Zoo Watch about 1990. She was never on the committee but put in a lot of hours in the first few years. She was able to relax at the zoo from the stress of work.
17.18	During the 2-hour watch she was able to note the animal behaviour and learned a lot about the animals, including names and ages.
18.58	She specialised in orangutans, siamangs, wombats and tree kangaroos in her Zoo watches. She remembers after the sea lion Birri tried to climb out of his enclosure, hot wires were introduced. Birri is still at the zoo.
22.29	Rosemary is now a guide about once a month and works on the Information Booth two days a month. She is also involved in conservation through “Cage to Conservation” and the Touch Table . In her role as guide she includes information about conservation and research by the zoo scientist David Taggart and Greg Johnson such as the study on mange in wombats, and work on the endangered Gilbert’s Potteroo .
25.19	A surrogate breeding program is being done on yellow footed rock wallabies and this has led to their re-introduction into the wild. The first group bred in captivity and released, were killed in the Canberra bushfires but subsequent releases have been successful.
26.12	Rosemary conducts tours of the food stores as part of the Education Program and takes children behind the scenes. The butcher’s shop is a shock to the children, especially when they see the horses but this is the closest food source to the wild zebra and is used to feed the big cats.
29.15	She explains the differences between wild and zoo animals through her work on the touch table and the use of skulls and teeth.
31.52	There were no behind-the-scenes opportunities when she was a child. She led tours behind the scenes on the new South East Asia exhibit. She still conducts behind-the-scenes tours for new members and uses this as an opportunity to bridge the gap between animals and humans and their understanding of conservation.
35.14	Rosemary talks to members about the cost of running the zoo and tells them how they can help though donating things to BEEZA for animal enhancement and behavioural enrichment. She explains that bears and primates need to be kept busy.
38.42	She used to be a volunteer at Monarto in the early days carrying buckets of water and collecting seeds, but since she had breast cancer she no longer has the stamina. She learned how to germinate eucalyptus seeds with hot water. In the early days they were very short staffed and she helped by mucking out the enclosure of the giraffe Kotabi who was hand-raised and very tame.
41.01	The central role of the volunteers is giving their time and their willingness to do a wide range of activities such as Zoo Watch where they can assist the keepers.
42.41	The Adelaide Zoo compares well to zoos in Europe and England and is great for kids. It is great as it is so close to the city for visitors who can just walk down from their hotel.

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45.37	Rosemary talks about the four years she spent working with Margaret Nagle to catalogue all the zoo photos. The first full-time vet was Dr Schultz who has now been there for 20 years.
47.26	For a long time the Zoo had to pay to build up its store of animals or rely on benefactors.
50.18	Rosemary explains that some of the photos from the collection were made into banners, which are still on show. Others were made into a calendar but the staff wouldn't buy it as they wanted it to portray the new Zoo, not the representations of the old Zoo.
52.49	In the early days there was a lot of hand-rearing of animals. This is part of the reason that the orangutan Karta is such a bad mother as she has never seen it done.
54.09	All the baboon babies have been reared by their mothers but this has led to some deaths as one of the fathers kills the babies.
56.56	Rosemary explains that elephants used to be given birthday parties for with a cake suitable for them. A keeper's wife raised two chimps, and she used to push them around in a pusher. The keeper, Lanky , raised many lions and his favourite was Caesar . When he was too big to live in the house Lanky put him in his enclosure and went to check on him one wet cold night. Lanky fell over and in the morning they found him with the lion sitting on his chest to keep him warm.
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