

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE PRESIDENT



It seems like so long ago that I last wrote to you. At the Zoo, we have been crazy busy with so many exciting projects, several of which have given me the opportunity to travel...

...the most exotic trip has even taken me to Panama to rescue frogs!

In fact, it feels like I haven't been home for months. But, whenever I'm gone, I'm always thinking about our Zoo family and team of supporters. It truly inspires me each day.

One of the most exciting projects in the works right now is the design of our newest exhibit, Encounter Africa. This exhibit will provide a new home for our African elephants and lions, as well as bring rhinos back to the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo. Right now, we are in the planning stage, working with our exhibit designer to create the most fantastic exhibit we can. As you can imagine, my staff has many requests for all the things that we just can't live without; it's often my job to try to figure out how to fit as many of those things in as possible.



(Returning from Panama)

Recently, in order to investigate some other elephant exhibits, a team of my staff and a couple of our Board Members visited three zoos, in different parts of the country, in three days. It was a whirlwind trip, but it gave us the opportunity to do some critical research on elephant exhibits being built around the country. The three zoos we visited were the Dallas Zoo, the Roger Williams Zoo in Rhode Island, and the North Carolina Zoo.



We talked to keepers, curators and executive zoo staff to learn as much as we could about their planning and building



processes. We walked the grounds, measured exhibits and holding areas, looked at architectural drawings and tried to learn as much as we could about what was or wasn't working for them and what it takes to build a truly great elephant exhibit.

One of the most interesting things that we learned is that we are really ahead of the curve in terms of building a truly first-class holding area for our elephants and rhinos. We looked at three really great elephant barns and walked away with the realization that the barn we are planning to build is HUGE!



Another interesting thing we learned on this trip was about elephant pools. We were happy to see that our pool design is very similar to pools in other successful exhibits. Seeing that we appear to be right on the money for effective pool design gave us that extra boost of confidence that our girls, Lucky, Kimba and Malaika will love their new home. One thing we saw on this trip that we hadn't thought of before was a waterfall--it turns out that elephants like waterfalls. This makes perfect sense, when you think about how much our elephants love bath time and being in their pool (you can imagine lots of splashing, spraying, playing and trumpeting.)



I think people like waterfalls too, because there is something magical about seeing an animal playing in the water. It reminds us of being a kid, splashing and laughing. We're hopeful that we can incorporate a waterfall into our new exhibit.

Overall, we had a really informative and worthwhile trip that helped us to better identify some key strengths and opportunities in our current exhibit plan. We got some great ideas and information from all three zoos, and we even made some new friends...



(Jason, our Elephant Manager)

...some of us worked harder than others...



(Kevin, a member of our Board)



...but I left that trip feeling on top of the world. Knowing that we have a strong Zoo family that includes committed donors, loyal friends and a passionate staff makes me more confident than ever that we will build a truly first-class new exhibit that will allow Cheyenne Mountain Zoo to help even more kids of all ages to fall in love with animals and nature...

...and, as Paul Harvey always used to say, there is a "rest of the story" I will have to tell you in person some day!

Until next time,

Bob Chastain

