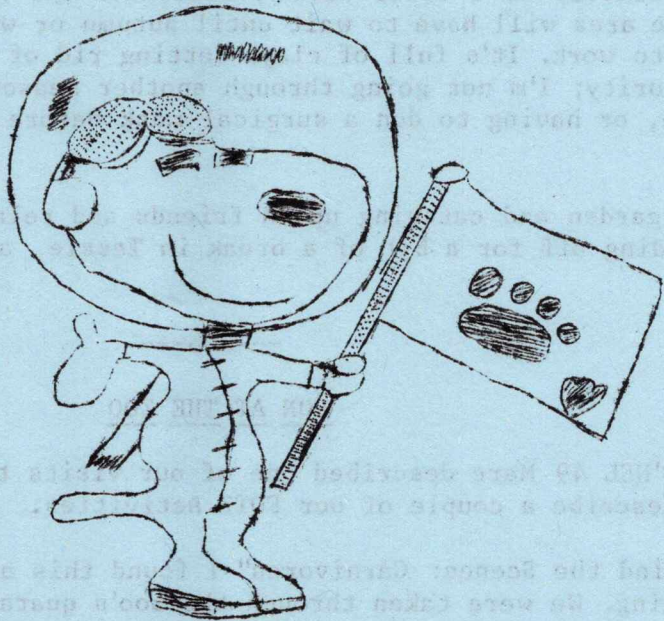


Produced by Catherine Griles of P.O. Box 217, Forest Hill, West 3131 for
WETA-TV. Please typographical errors added by the typist and Editor
the Microbee. The date for this version is 1/11/81.

BEAGLE'S



WORLD

REVISITED

BEAGLE'S WORLD REVISITED 29

Produced by Catherine Ortlieb of P.O. Box 215, Forest Hill, Vict 3131 for ANZAPA. Extra typographical errors added by the impudent typist and Eccles the Microbee. The date for this version is 17/1/86.

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Boy, where have the holidays gone? Once school work was out of the way, I began to attack the jungle that had taken over our garden. It took a number of back-breaking days and many wheelbarrows full of weeds to tidy it up. I've already had to go back over the areas to get rid of some new sproutings. I'm determined never to let it get into that state again.

The trouble is I still haven't finished. The old vegetable patch and back fence area will have to wait until autumn or winter as the ground is too hard to work. It's full of clay. Getting rid of the jasmine was my first priority; I'm not going through another season of being trapped in my own house, or having to don a surgical mask before stepping out of the back door!

The garden and catching up on friends and relatives have kept us busy. We're heading off for a bit of a break in Tassie, and then it's back to school.

---oOo---

FUN AT THE ZOO

In G'NEL 49 Marc described one of our visits to the Zoo. Now it's my turn to describe a couple of our FOTZ Activities.

"Behind the Scenes: Carnivores" I found this activity one of the most enlightening. We were taken through the zoo's quaranteen area to the food preparation areas first. They got nuts, bread, fruit and vegetables - suitable for human consumption - from the market. They still have a very old abattoir, but most of the meat fed to the animals is brought in, and so they use it as an abattoir very infrequently. Usually it is just a meat storage and preparation area. It was sad to see a yard full of chicks that would eventually end up as some animal's dinner. We were assured that they were killed humanely, and that they made up an important part of the diet of a number of animals. There were also a few goats that were occasionally slaughtered when certain animals, particularly sick ones, needed fresh meat.

After that we got to see some of the animals that are kept behind the scenes for various reasons, e.g. lack of a suitable exhibit, or the need to separate problem animals from the rest. They had brought in a new male ocelot to help improve the gene pool. The trouble was that he turned out to be very unpredictable and disagreeable. The keepers considered him dangerous, and the ocelot females didn't want anything to do with him, and so he was a bit of a "white elephant". All they could do was resort to artificial insemination so that they could benefit from his presence.

They also kept the female cheetah behind the scenes, separate from the four males, in the hope that distance would make the heart grow fonder. In the case of cheetahs, familiarity does breed contempt, and cheetahs that are too familiar with each other don't breed. They have a long tunnel built

along the back wall of the Zoo, between her cage and the main cheetah exhibit. This allows her exercise, and they can also allow her into the main exhibit through the tunnel when they feel that she is sufficiently interested in the males.

We were then taken behind the big cat enclosures. There was a caged-in walkway that enabled us to get right in behind the cats' sleeping/holding area. I tried to get a good photograph of the panthers but they kept rushing the fence that separated us. We were assured that they only wanted to play, but we were advised to keep our distance, as they played rough. Next was a female tiger who was being kept separate because of her bad temper. She was not pleased at being imposed upon. She remained crouched behind a large log in the centre of the area. We could just see the top of her head and the tail, but that was enough to tell us that she was agitated, as the tail was swishing through the air and her whiskers were twitching up and down.

Marius, our guide, was explaining that we couldn't go any further. They thought that the snow leopard was pregnant. They were excited by this, because snow leopards don't breed readily in captivity, and the Melbourne pair are the only snow leopards in Australia. As a result they weren't taking any chances, and certainly didn't want the female disturbed, and so we missed out on seeing some of the other cats. While we were listening to Marius we weren't paying much attention to the tiger. Suddenly she stuck her head over the log and let out this incredibly loud R-O-A-R. It scared the living daylights out of us. We forgot that there was a protective fence between her and us. She was like a jack-in-the-box. Once we'd recovered our wits - I nearly dropped my camera - we left that and were taken to the area between the small cats and the lions.

They had decided to feed the lions a few hours early, so that we could see them up close. The lions could tell that they were going to be fed, and they paced back and forth by the individual booths in which they are fed. They have to be fed individually so that the amount of food each animal eats can be monitored, and medications can be administered. The lionesses, for instance, were on the Pill for quite a while.

[UPDATE: This whole issue was discussed recently in THE AGE (8/1/86)

"... Melissa [the tiger who scared us] and others had not suffered noticeable side-effects from the Pill. 'Melissa is a miserable character any way and the jaguar has been on it for years and still all she wants to do is eat you.'... A number of the female lions have been taken of the Pill and Zoo staff are trying to encourage the sole male lion to perform his duty. 'But we are having severe problems as he appears to be suffering from an inferiority complex and is harassed and dominated by the three females. He does appear to be a wimp']"

We were kept about ten feet back from the cages as the keeper threw the huge chunks of horse meat through the gaps at the bottom of the cages. Believe me we wouldn't have wanted to have been any closer. Those lions were BIG and kept looking at us when they'd finished. (It didn't take them long.) As Marius said, after seeing them like that it was very difficult to believe any of those stories of men wrestling hungry lions - a man would not stand a chance. Occasionally they give the lions a treat e.g. half a horse's head, and Marius had seen a lion crush the skull with one paw in order to get it through the bars.

The small cats were cute, but were quite willing to prove that they were as tough as their bigger cousins. Boy could they spit and growl if we got too close. Marius told us that they'd found the remains of nearly thirty different species of birds and small mammals in the cages. It's dangerous to make unauthorized visits to the cats. Peacock remains are regularly found in the big cat enclosures - a gruesome ending for this report but I found the whole activity an eye-opener. I hope that we can get into other behind the scenes activities, especially the reptiles and, if offered, the apes.

This made me even more excited about the "Keeper for a Day" Activity. I knew we wouldn't be able to do much but relished any opportunity to get closer to the animals. I won't go over the day again, except to add that I learnt a lot. Shovelling up emu and kangaroo droppings wasn't a particularly thrilling job, but I was able to get quite close to some young joeys who still spent most of their time in the pouch. Most of our task involved the group raking up droppings and/or leaves while one or two moved along behind us with a shovel and one of those huge bins on wheels. Since we were in an area open to the public, we got many strange stares from people walking through.

It was interesting to talk to the keeper as he explained that this sort of activity took up most of their time; the stories of the glamorous lives led by Zoo Keepers are an exaggeration. Their main task is to keep the enclosures clean and tidy; they're concerned about the spread of disease. He admitted that he wasn't sure what to expect from having us there, but he did appreciate our help. While I was cleaning out one section near the fence that divided it from another enclosure, the keeper there looked over the fence and inquired about my presence.

"Oh, you're one of those FOTZ members are you? Hmmn. . . "

It was later that we found out that many of the keepers were wary of us. Apparently they were quite happy once the activity got underway.

After lunch we went through the children's section, watching them feed the snakes, sugar gliders, bats, possums and other small mammals. I got a bit of a shock when I reached out to pet the sugar glider. He ran straight up my arm. Apart from the initial fright, it was a pleasant experience. He was really very cute, and soft to the touch, and I didn't mind the scratches I acquired as a result of his venture.

When they had one of the snake "cages" opened I asked if I could touch the python. The keeper said I could if I wished and I was surprised to find that the skin was cool, but smooth and dry not slimy as I'd imagined. I didn't leave my hand there long - I'm not that game - but I think I could now be talked into handling one that was quite tame. They did explain that the constrictors could cause problems. One keeper was a little careless and one of the pythons was very quick. It wrapped itself around his wrist and then, when he tried to untangle it, it got his other wrist. There he was, on his own, and effectively hand-cuffed by a python. He had to make a rather embarrassed phone call to another keeper to come and free him, as he couldn't really walk around the Zoo with a python wrapped around his arms! One of the keepers in the Reptile House was recently bitten by a pigmy rattlesnake - the hazards of the job!

All this FOTZing has resulted in some extra excursions for me at school. I'd been pumping the staff with the information I'd picked up and so had been declared a Zoo expert. Thus I got to go on both Year Seven Zoo

excursions so I could help the kids complete their assignments. The first visit went very well, except for my hearing after being stuck in a railway carriage with all those kids! The second visit was real "fun". We'd only been there a little over an hour when the heavens opened up. It was an incredibly heavy downpour. The Zoo shop ran out of pocket raincoats. I had an umbrella, but still had to buy a raincoat to keep dry. We then spent most of the rest of the time huddled under the over-crowded shelters, occasionally venturing out to bring kids in out of the rain. It was incredible. You'd have thought that we were in the middle of a heat-wave - it was quite cold - and that the kids had access to dry clothes - they didn't. Some of the kids were soaked through. Believe me, being stuck in a train carriage with that number of noisy, wet and smelly Year Sevens is beyond the call of duty.

---oOo---

STAFF PRANKS

One of our school cleaners, Alan, loves to play pranks, especially on the office staff and/or the administration. Just before the end of the year he went too far. He managed to rig up a nail and fake blood and claimed that he had just driven the nail through his thumb. It looked so realistic that one of the women in the office nearly passed out. They were determined to get him back.

By using some Regional Departmental letterhead paper and the photocopier they drafted a reply to the school's (legitimate) request for extra money to repair the roof. A new alarm system had been installed and it seemed that the workers had damaged the roof while installing it. The unusually heavy rain we'd been experiencing meant that buckets had to be placed along the corridor to stop minor flooding. Anyway, the bogus reply to our request stated that no money would be forthcoming until a chart showing the rainfall for Croydon for the past twelve months was filled in. Alan was driven mad checking the local paper, and making numerous phone calls to obtain the information. Milton presented his completed chart to him at the end-of-year staff lunch.

---oOo---

END OF AN ERA

Going into the city just won't be the same without Space Age. I can remember the first, small shop, where I bought some of the first sf books I ever owned. After becoming involved in fandom, I visited the shop almost every time I went into the city, and certainly every Friday night. I'd hate to think just how much I've spent there over the years. I've always felt a certain loyalty to the shop. I was there so often that a few people thought I worked there. I have many fond memories of the time I've spent in the shop, the people I've met and the books I've bought, particularly second-hand ones that weren't available elsewhere. Space Age was a meeting/contact place for fans and it will be quite a while before a replacement is found. I'm very sorry the shop went under and, although I knew it was in difficulty, I always hoped that things would work out. It is truly the end of an era.

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MAILING COMMENTS - ANZAPA 107

Land of 10,000 Loons Re your weather, Jeanette, my Aussie friend who lives in St Paul and who is looking forward to coming back to Australia in June, wrote recently complaining about how cold it was already. "You've got to be crazy to spend your whole life here. Man wasn't meant to live in an icebox!" Mind you, Jeanette thought it got cold here so she's had a bad time with your winters. When I visited, her husband Jim and brother-in-law Daryl took me to the Minnesota Zoo - which I'll eventually get to write about. I must admit that the idea of skiing in a zoo really amazed me. I don't ski, so we only looked at the main part, but that was fascinating.

Halloween is starting to get a following in Australia. I suppose it's because we're exposed to so much American T.V.. I hope it never becomes a part of our calendar year as I'd rather we tried something Australian. We have enough imported celebrations without absorbing one as a result of the flood of American products that come into this country.

Kingdom of the Bland (Jean) RYCT Eunice: I couldn't agree with you more about your feelings towards Christians. I know some can be very pushy and can cause problems but I do wish all people were more prepared to accept each other as individuals, rather than taking the easy way out and putting them into "boxes".

Re AUSSIECON TWO: I agree with you about Phyllis Ann Karr. Although I haven't read any of her books yet, I found her to be a very pleasant and helpful person. She was a god-send to us during the con as she helped us out of a few difficult situations. I made a point of getting to her reading, especially as it wasn't very well attended, and felt that people missed a very entertaining author. It is a pity that she wasn't well known here.

Eric: Boy, another who got to room parties and met stacks of people. Envy!

The Dilettante's Journal 5 RYCT Allan Bray: I couldn't agree with you more about programming. That was a real problem that we faced as so many fans wanted/expected a programme that catered mainly for them. We had to keep in mind that there would be many people who rarely or never attended conventions. We designed the AUSSIECON programme to try to keep non-fans interested. I'd invited a few friends to conventions before, and they had complained that, as they didn't know people or the general goings on, they found some panels hard to follow, and the in-between times very boring. I know that some non-fans who attended AUSSIECON were only interested in the programme. We know that the programme wasn't perfect - far from it - but we worked long hours to produce something that would appeal to all attendees, not just to regular con goers, many of whom don't really need a programme anyway.

Mumble. Someone else who got to see "Cats". If they don't bring it to Melbourne I'm going to be very annoyed. We certainly can't afford to fly to Sydney to see a play, and I'm not sure that Marc would want to come anyway. I tried to see it when I was in London, but it was booked solid for months!

---oOo---

I found writing this contribution quite difficult. Although I spent some time sorting out files etc. for school, I had a terrible time just sitting down to write. I guess I needed a total break. Anyway this is all I could manage.

Take care,

lath