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PrimeApes

Newsletter of the Center for Great Apes

By Patti Ragan

Originally established fourteen years ago to provide care for a few orangutans and chimpanzees born at a tourist attraction (and destined for the entertainment business), the Center for Great Apes has rescued more than 40 great apes needing a safe place and permanent home. Some have come from the movie and advertising business, where they quickly outgrew their usefulness to their owners.

Some have come to us from roadside attractions where they were dumped when too large to perform. A few arrived from research labs, and some came from homes where private individuals had purchased them as babies but



Linus

soon had no good option for the growing adolescents and huge adults they became.

Two years ago, a significant event happened in the captive ape world – the largest owner and user of great apes in Hollywood permanently left the business of working great apes in movies, TV, live stage shows, and advertising. Those orangutan and chimpanzee infants, adolescents, and breeder adults owned by the retired California trainer moved to the Center for Great Apes in 2005 and have been introduced back to their original families.

Over the past year owners of other chimpanzees and orangutans have asked us to accept more apes who have become too large to

live in their homes or too strong to work as performers.

In March 2005, a castrated adult male orangutan named **Chuckie** was sent to us from a California trainer where he had lived for more than a decade at a performing chimpanzee compound. The last orangutan Chuckie had seen more than sixteen years ago was the one he worked with as an infant in the circus – our **Radcliffe!** So, happily, Chuckie and Radcliffe are together again. Even though adult male orangutans would not live together normally, these ex-zoo, ex-circus performers are both castrated and get along beautifully in the same enclosure.

A few months later we received an urgent call from a private owner up north who had three adult apes in small, single cages inside the garage. The 300-pound adult male orangutan was breaking out of his cage, and a twenty-year old adult male chimpanzee was panicking and doing the same. With the emergency help of a New York veterinarian, those two males and an adult female orangutan were safely captured, crated, and shipped to Wauchula. **Linus, Mickey, and Kiki** are now learning to live in the sunshine and rain, with space to climb and move around in, and with others of their own species.

While we have made room for some extreme cases who needed immediate care, we have sadly had to turn others down due to lack of housing (until more facilities can be built and more funds raised) to care for those apes. Breeders who originally sell these ape babies for work or pet situations and the companies who use them for clever and funny advertising or entertainment *never* taken part in the long term responsibility for them. It is sanctuaries (and their members and supporters who care about great apes) that take on this responsibility and opportunity to give them a new life. We thank you for that!

–Special Thanks–





Jacob and
Jonah

C. Karlik

Advertisements Using Chimpanzees

By Gerry Lukos, Beaverton, Oregon

The Friday morning before this year's Super Bowl, the business section of the Oregonian featured a front page story about the success of a local ad agency with its "Trunk Monkey" spots for Chevrolet Suburban. It reported that the agency (R/West) is licensing the commercials to car dealerships around the world for tens of thousands of dollars a year each and has hit the big time because they will be running in local markets during the annual football extravaganza.

Coincidentally, just 24 hours earlier I was in Florida visiting the Center for Great Apes, a sanctuary that is now the home of twins Jonah and Jacob, two sub-adult chimpanzees who were used in the first series of Trunk Monkey commercials three years ago.

Like others who have profited from the exploitation of great apes, the ad agency president will probably tell you that he only works with trainers who look out for the welfare of their animals and don't use abusive methods. And it is true that a few current trainers generally care for their chimpanzees and orangutans and want to keep them healthy and happy. They are, after all, valuable, cash-generating property. But the show business career of a great ape is short. By the age of six or seven, they are too dangerous and difficult to handle. What happens when a chimp, who can live fifty years or more is no longer able to earn his keep in front of the camera?

Some are kept for breeding. Babies who would normally spend four to six years with their mothers learning how to be proper apes are pulled when they are just weeks or days old and hand reared, perpetuating the cycle. Others may be sent off to squalid roadside zoos or research labs because accredited zoos won't usually accept these apes from entertainment.

Jonah and Jacob are among the lucky ones. They ended up at one of the few sanctuaries set up for adult apes that have aged out of the entertainment trade. That's the good news. The bad news? The profits they helped generate went to their trainers and to ad agencies and to the companies that used them to attract customers. Little was set aside to care for them when their usefulness was past. Now, at age ten, they are looking at forty or more years of "retirement."

Patti Ragan, director of the Center for Great Apes in Wauchula, Florida, says that it costs almost \$15,000 a year to provide food, veterinary services, and general care for each one of the 43 apes currently at her sanctuary. And that doesn't even count the expense of building suitable housing or administrative and fundraising costs.

Years from now, when the Trunk Monkey is just a memory, the discarded chimps who made this lucrative commercial possible will still need daily care.

Here is a challenge for R/West and other ad agencies using great apes in their projects: Set a standard for your industry. Pledge to stop using chimpanzee actors and switch to computer-generated imagery. Use your creative talents to help stop the exploitation of endangered great apes.

In Memoriam

We were saddened by the loss of a few of our members and friends last year. Generous contributions honoring these people were made to the Center for Great Apes by their friends and family in their memory.

Bob Yokel, former director of Miami MetroZoo, was one of the first people to visit our Wauchula location in 1997, before we even purchased the property. Knowing his experience and expertise in building MetroZoo since the 1970s, we were eager to get his input on constructing our new sanctuary. Mr. Yokel visited the Center in Wauchula several times over the years, and remained a loyal member and supporter.

Mary Pat Widmer, mother of our Board of Directors member Pat Kelly, lived in both New York and in Key Biscayne. She often visited the Center with her daughter and will be missed.

Surprise Legacy for the Center

Miami member **Susan J. Hosking Kurtz** joined the Center for Great Apes in 1996 and over the years was only able to visit us once in Wauchula. She maintained her individual membership for a few years. We were sad to hear that she had passed away last summer, but were completely shocked when we received a letter from her insurance company advising us that Susan had named the Center for Great Apes as a beneficiary on her annuity.

With this amazing gesture (which she never mentioned to us), Susan has provided funding and support for the apes in a major way. In fact, as we've worked for three years to raise funding for a habitat for handicapped chimpanzee Knuckles (as well as for geriatric apes with special needs), we've fallen short of our goal by more than \$50,000. Through Susan's thoughtfulness, we can now meet our construction costs and move ahead. We will be forever grateful to Susan J. Hosking Kurtz.

Press Highlights

In November 2006 the Center for Great Apes was included in a documentary for PBS's *Nature* series entitled *Chimpanzees: An Unnatural History*. The film by writer and director **Alison Argo** primarily told the story of former biomedical lab chimps who were retired to two sanctuaries (Save the Chimps and Fauna Foundation). One segment of the documentary talked about the entertainment chimpanzees retired at the Center for Great Apes. To learn more about Argo's film visit the PBS website (www.pbs.org).

· Another story about chimpanzee retirement appeared as the cover story on the July 24, 2005, issue of *The New York Times Magazine*. While most of the article focused on lab chimp retirement, there was a section about ex-show business apes retiring to the Center. Register free of charge at www.nytimes.com to view the article: "Planet of the Retired Apes" by **Charles Siebert**.



Alison Argo and crew film a documentary to be aired on PBS, above. Jane Goodall and the staff participate in a "grooming" session, left.



chutes to Dr. Goodall.

This past summer we welcomed elephant scientist and director of the Amboseli Elephant Research Project in Kenya, **Cynthia Moss**, who has

studied and lived with elephants for more than 35 years. Moss spoke at length with the staff about the problems facing elephants in Africa and the challenges of protecting them. Cynthia Moss is the author of *Elephant Memories*, *Echo of the Elephants*, and *Portraits in the Wild*.

Special Visitors

Our staff was thrilled to welcome **Dr. Jane Goodall** to the Center for Great Apes last year. Dr. Goodall's observational research at Gombe National Park in Tanzania has defined modern primatology and her continuing work on behalf of chimpanzee welfare has made her a revered figure worldwide. Dr. Goodall, along with her sister Judy, her assistant Mary Lewis, and Nona Gandelman of the Jane Goodall Institute, spent the afternoon meeting and greeting each of our chimpanzees and orangutans.

Adolescent chimpanzee Grub was inspired to make a mask and then dropped it down from the overhead



Center director Patti Ragan and primatologist Jane Goodall

J. Haut

Other television shows featuring the Center for Great Apes last year included: NBC's **Today Show**, **WPBS Channel 2** in Miami, **Fox News** in Tampa, and a local public access program *Polk Tales*.

An entire episode of the WPBS series *Wild Florida* starring **Hunter Reno** was also filmed at the Center and first aired in Miami. The repeat broadcast of *Wild Florida* airs often on public TV channels around the Southeastern United States.

Postage Stamps

Special U.S. postage stamps featuring the Center's apes are now available. For every stamp you buy, funds are donated to the Center for Great Apes. Visit www.CenterForGreatApes.org to purchase these new items!

Apes Meet Apes

With the addition of so many new chimpanzees and orangutans to the Center's population, there have been new opportunities for social groups and even the opportunity to reunite a few youngsters with their mothers from whom they were taken as infants.

- Jam, a four-year-old male, was housed at his trainer's compound with two other orangutan youngsters, Pebbles and BamBam. While these young apes have fun playing with one another, they need adult role models just as humans do. Jam has been introduced back to his own mother, Geri, who arrived at the Center with her mate (Sammy) about six months before Jam was sent to us. He still likes to play with Tango, BamBam, and Pebbles but loves to cuddle with Geri in her nest at night. However Jam is frightened of his 250-pound father, Sammy, so Geri travels in the chute system between Sammy and Jam spending time with each of them separately.

- Six-year-old Pebbles was adopted at age four by our adult female, Mari. Although Mari has no arms, she coped well with Pebbles, grooming her, playing with her, and even sharing food from her mouth. The real surprise though, was when we introduced Pebbles to males Pongo and Christopher. Pongo is now a 200-plus pound adult male with full facial cheekpads, but Pebbles was not afraid of him. As soon as they were introduced, Pebbles approached Pongo, climbed on him,

sat on his head, and even hugged him.

- Eight-year-old orangutan BamBam (who worked for two years in the TV soap opera *Pas-sions*) lives with teenage orangutan Louie who once performed in live stage shows at a Los Angeles tourist attraction. Though BamBam had the company of other orangutan babies growing up in Hollywood, Louie did not. Louie spent most of his infancy and juvenility working with trainers for the Universal Studios shows or waiting alone backstage in his cage. Louie was introduced to several orangutans after his arrival at the sanctuary, but did not know how to act in their presence. Now Louie and BamBam get along quite well together and can stroll through the woods in the chute system to meet the other youngsters and play with Tango, Jam, and Pebbles.

Chimpanzee introductions can be more challenging (and certainly louder and more boisterous) than those of orangutans. Socialization is an especially difficult process for chimpanzees who have lived with humans for many years without exposure to others of their species. Denyse (age 38), Marco (age 47), Roger (28), and Mickey (20) have gradually been introduced to other chimpanzees at the Center. The meetings are sometimes frightening to these shy, awkward apes and can be dangerous as well. Progress continues to be made, how-



Above, Pongo and Pebbles became instant friends. Right, Marco takes each day as it comes



C. Karlik

ever, in helping these apes learn to live with other chimpanzees.

- After spending nearly 30 years alone in a small backyard cage in South Carolina, never seeing another chimpanzee, ex-circus performer Marco now lives happily and playfully with another older circus male, Butch (35). Marco is the oldest ape at the center and has only been here one year. Roger, who was outplaced from Ringling Brothers circus to a roadside attraction in Central Florida had lived alone for years but is now fast friends with 33-year-old Chipper, and these two boys are in the process of being integrated with Marco and Butch.

- The most heartwarming introduction for many of the staff was the return of baby Kodua to her natural chimpanzee family. Kodua was only two years old when she arrived in



Youngsters Stryker and Kodua play with family members

C. Karlik



Christopher embraces Pebbles

R. Rode



Kodua and Oopsie are introduced

Wauchula had already worked in at least two Hollywood commercials. In one ad first shown in a Superbowl game, she sits on a Xerox machine with her trousers down. In another ad for water quality, she sits in a tree supposedly watching a computer-generated elephant dancing in the jungle to *Singing in the Rain*.

When she first arrived Kodua was more comfortable in the presence of humans than with chimpanzees, but did have a little friend, Mowgli, who arrived with her from California. (*Mowgli is three years older than Kodua and now lives with Brooks and Natsu.*) Kodua always wanted to be with the staff, and often had play sessions with our special boy, Knuckles. As a baby, Kodua was very gentle with Knuckles seeming to instinctively know his limitations.

But since Kodua's mother (Jessie) as well as her maternal grandmother

(Oopsie) and her maternal aunt (Boma) were all now at the sanctuary, we felt an obligation to return her to her family. Since Kodua was so little, all the chimps in the group, including the older males, Sam (38) and Bubbles (24), immediately fell in love with her. When she went inside the enclosure, it was only with one adult at a time, and the first was her grandmother, Oopsie.

Oopsie had given birth to six or seven infants in California, but all were taken from her to train or sell, so she never had an opportunity to raise a baby. She decided from the first day that Kodua was *her* baby and adopted her immediately.

When Kodua was then introduced to Boma and to her birth-mother, Jessie, both females treated her as "Oopsie's baby" and there was no possessive struggle. Kodua now has a glorious relationship with the adults in her group — especially with her baby brother, Stryker. Both kids play non-stop and rarely leave the older (and very patient) males alone, constantly and playfully pestering them.

Kodua still has special sessions with Knuckles and is a terrific play-therapist for him.

Bonus Baby

In 2005 when we agreed to provide a sanctuary home for a large group of Hollywood apes, there were originally eleven chimpanzees moving from California as well as six orangutans.

However the owner didn't know at the time of our agreement that one of the chimpanzees, seventeen-year-old Jessie, was pregnant. When Jessie arrived in Wauchula she was carrying in her arms a brand new baby boy!

Jessie, who was taken from her mother when still an infant, then hand-raised and trained for the entertainment business, had already given birth twice earlier.

The first infant was sold to a private individual and today (at age six) is still working in a small, traveling circus and rodeo show as a performer. The second infant was also pulled from Jessie and raised for the movie business. (Kodua is now four, and arrived here at the sanctuary two years ago.)



Jessie and Stryker

This third surprise baby is the first infant Jessie has been allowed to raise, and she is thriving in her role as mother.

Jessie and Stryker (now two years old) have been introduced back to Jessie's mother Oopsie and Jessie's older sister (Boma) along with adult males Bubbles and Sam.

So little Stryker is not only growing up with his own mother but also his aunt, grandmother, and big sister.

Yes!



I want to participate in this tax deductible effort to help chimpanzees and orangutans.

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Center for GREAT APES



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Old Sam tickling a gleeful Kodua

C. Karlik