

MELINTANG Chris Brack

This female Sumatran Rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis sumatrensis*) - registered as Studbook number 003 - was wild caught on the 18th April 1985 in Perak, Malaysia, by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks in a designated area threatened through land degradation, where the animals would have had little chance of survival. She was initially transported to Melaka Zoo, but in July 1986 she was presented as a gift to King Bhumipol, the Thai King, from Sultan Iskander, the constitutional monarch of Malaysia. This was greeted a greatly controversial; a young potentially viable breeding female, now only to be kept as an exhibit individual. But, nevertheless, she left Malaysia and was not kept on the Chitralada Palace grounds in the "Royal Elephant Pavilions" but went on exhibit next door at Dusit Zoo, Bangkok. Unfortunately, her life expectancy was not long, she died on the 15th November 1986, cause of death was given "as an accidental fall in the enclosure "!

I am aware that this individual had not been photographed very often, so it is significant to be able to publish these "live" photos of Melintang from 1986 from Wolfgang Nahring's photo collection, saved before his wife threw (as seems to be a general rule!) all his slides etc in the bin.



Melintang in her outside enclosure's pool 1986.
Photos: © Wolfgang Nähring



I managed to visit Singapore and Thailand for the first time in 1990, at the time visiting colleagues in Safari World, a former Chipperfield Safari Park on the outskirts of Bangkok, where Wolfgang trained elephants for Mr Pin the Chinese owner. But by then, Melintang was only a stuffed exhibit in the museum, so again in 1991 "we" visited with Graham Law and his wife Roseanne at Dusit Zoo.



During our visit, the zoological museum in Dusit Zoo hung a rack of antlers of the extinct Schomburgk's deer *Cervus schomburgki* (Blyth 1863), also in the museum was the body of Melintang. The Dusit Zoo closed on the 30th August 2018, but the grounds have since re-opened to the public in 2020, and now named "Queen Sirikit Park"; this new zoo, on the outskirts of Bangkok, Patham Thani province, will hopefully house the museum again?

Left: The Late Graham Law viewing Melintang in the Zoological Museum, 1991 and, below, the magnificent rack of antlers on exhibit in the Museum 1990. Photos: © Chris Brack

One Schomburgk's deer had been shot September 1932, but the last live individual, kept as a pet on the grounds of Maha Chai temple, 30 kilometres southwest of Bangkok, was killed by a drunk in 1938. (Boonsong L., McNeeley J. 1977). Nevertheless, rumours have persisted that it may still exist, antlers supposedly originating from Laos photographed by an agronomist in a medicine shop 1991(Shuker Karl 2002)? This endemic Cervid has only rarely been exhibited, with 17 examples (Mohr. E, 1968) outside of its natural distribution during 1862 and 1911: London; Berlin (one male, captured 1897 and taken by a railroad official to Berlin in 1898, lived in the zoo until its death in 1911); Hamburg Zoo (8.3 fawns born in the Hamburg Zoo, (E Mohr 1968); Cologne, Paris and Singapore, with the only known mounted individual exhibited in Paris, originating from Jardin des Plantes 1867, originally recorded as *Cervus duvaucelii* Barasingha, Mohr, E. 1968 (Whitehead Kenneth G 1993).



Wolfgang Nähring started his zoo career at Cologne Zoo in the early 1960s, then was offered a position with Willy Kübler, Austrian Chimpanzee artiste, who worked around many circus rings with his Chimp act, afterwards working in Karlsruhe and Landau zoos moving again to Holiday on Ice, in Paris, presenting a donkey act. Then he moved to the UK, working at Dudley Zoo for Scotia Enterprises on the Apes, his nickname being "Nasty Nähring", also to Scarborough Marineland to present the Chimp show and eventually marrying his first wife Amanda, who presented the dolphin show there. They moved back to his native Germany, after asking the local employment office if there was a position available in any German zoo for himself and Mandy, he was offered the position at Krefeld Zoo, caring for initially the Apes, then moved onto Elephants, Rhinos and Pygmy Hippo, his elephant shows in Krefeld Zoo were a source of immense city pride, he remained in Krefeld until his retirement in 2012.

Wolfgang Nähring loved Asia, its wildlife and especially its Elephants. He always spent the Winters in South east Asia, traveling, he would have many contracts with zoos as a consultant, his immense talents as an Elephant trainer being his main source of "pocket money" during his travels. The story about him drinking the private Polo Club empty of alcoholic beverages, during his stay in Brunei, while working for the Sultans private Elephant stable is still a source of great amusement for all his friends today! His life unfortunately came too quickly to an end in 2016.

Graham Law was for many years Head Carnivore keeper at Glasgow Zoo, before moving to the University when the zoo closed, unfortunately passing away during the Corona restrictions.

References:

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LION ON THE LOOSE!

Zoo Curator Clyde Gordon finds EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER...in handling "big cats"...and in choosing a cigarette, too!

WHILE MOVING TWO LIONS INTO A NEW CAGE AT THE ZOO...

FAWNA'S ON HER WAY -- BUT IT LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE WITH SULTANA!

BE CAREFUL! I'VE LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCE -- LIONS RAISED IN CAPTIVITY CAN BE MORE DANGEROUS THAN JUNGLE BORN!

WITH A SUDDEN ROAR...

SULTANA LEAPS THROUGH THE DARK POOL -- CRASHES THROUGH THE RUNWAY FENCE!

RUN, CHIEF!

NO -- THAT'S THE WORST THING I COULD DO!

EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER* LONG EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT CLYDE GORDON NEVER TO SHOW FEAR TO AN ANIMAL. HE STANDS HIS GROUND... SPEAKING SOFTLY, INSISTENTLY... WHILE DIVERTING HER ATTENTION WITH BROOM HANDLE.

STEADY, GIRL, STEADY... NOW BACK INTO THE RUNWAY... AND TRY YOUR NEW CAGE!

LOOKS LIKE SHE'S GOING TO OBEY!

THAT WAS CLOSE, CHIEF. BUT YOU SURE HANDLED THINGS RIGHT!... HAVE A CAMEL!

THANKS... EXPERIENCE COMES IN HANDY -- WHETHER YOU'RE HANDLING ANIMALS OR CHOOSING A CIGARETTE! THAT'S WHY I SMOKE CAMELS!

Let your "T-Zone" tell you why!

T for Taste... T for Throat... that's your goodie ground for any cigarette. See if Camels don't suit your "T-Zone" to a "T."

Zoo Curator Clyde Gordon says:

I'VE LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCE THAT MILD, FULL-FLAVORED CAMELS SUIT ME TO A 'T'!

Clyde Gordon
General Curator and Director
Staten Island Zoo

According to a Nationwide survey:
MORE DOCTORS SMOKE CAMELS THAN ANY OTHER CIGARETTE

When 113,297 doctors were asked by three independent research organizations to name the cigarette they smoked, more doctors named Camel than any other brand!

CAMELS -- the Choice of Experience!

At last, space to include this 1948 advertisement for Camel cigarettes, sent by Ken Kawata. Clyde Gordon was curator at Staten Island Zoo. No comments needed – the world has changed!