



OUR COMMUNITY | OUR STORY

## **Pandamonium Pre-Visit Zoo Characters through Time**

**Objective:** Students will understand the people who were the driving force behind some of the biggest and best known changes in the San Diego Zoo.

**Recommended Grade Levels:** 3-5

### **Common Core Standards Addressed:**

Reading Standards for Informational Text; Key Ideas and Details: 1, 3

Reading Standards for Informational Text; Craft and Structure 6

Reading Standards for Informational Text; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8,9

Speaking and Listening 3,4

**Time Required:** ~45-55 minutes

### **Materials:**

Attached Personality Profiles

Pencils

Paper

Projector for montage (this is recommended but the activity can be done without the clip if necessary)

### **Instructions:**

1. Show montage from the Late Night with Johnny Carson. (recommended but not required)
  - a. Clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4KLW0ZobH4>
2. Divide students into pairs and give each pair one of the attached Personality Profiles.
3. Students can use the Personality Profiles to develop a set of interview questions and answers.
4. One student will be the character from the Personality Profile and the other will be Johnny Carson.
5. Give students about 20 minutes to come up with the interview questions.
6. Let them practice for about 10 minutes.
7. Each pair will come up and present their interview to the rest of the class.

## **PERSONALITY PROFILE**

### **JOAN EMBERY – CONSERVATION AMBASSADOR**

**“In some ways, my career was closely tied to an elephant.”**

*Joan Embery*

In 47 years with the San Diego Zoo, Joan Embery has been snarled at, kicked around, stepped on, spit on and walked over. She’s loved every minute of it.

Joan grew up in a family passionate about all creatures great and small. Joan’s special love was horses, a passion of hers to this day.

Joan had been visiting the Zoo since she was a child. Her earliest memory there was falling into the duck pond. From the start, her favorite animals were the elephants. On her first day as a Children’s Zoo attendant in 1968, she fell in love with an Asian elephant, Carol. One of her duties was to help train Carol. “Teaching Carol to hold a paintbrush led to our first local news story about the painting elephant, picked up by newspapers all over the country, leading to our appearance on ‘The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson.’ That led to all the other television show appearances.”

In 1970, Joan was hired as Miss Zoofari but quickly dropped the name in favor of Goodwill Ambassador. Her duties included public appearances, speaking engagements, radio and magazine interviews and television shows. She appeared on “The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson” more than 100 times, and she estimates that nearly a billion people have seen her on television.

Over the years, Joan added more content about environmental and conservation issues to her public appearances, and now she speaks at San Diego Zoo events as Conservation Ambassador. In 2004, Joan created her own non-profit foundation, The Embery Institute for Wildlife Conservation. Joan is never far from the animals she loves. She cares for her own group of wildlife ambassadors at her 50-acre ranch in Lakeside. She and her husband Duane Pillsbury manage a community equestrian facility on their ranch and raise and train horses.

Joan continues working with animals, speaking with audiences about wildlife and the environment and sharing her passion for animals with personal accounts and anecdotes.

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

### **BELLE BENCHLEY – ‘THE ZOO LADY’ (1882-1973)**

**“I’m sure the Zoo will be around long after I’m gone. After all, I brought a lot of people working here up from pups, and saw to it that they learned their lessons well.”**

*Belle Benchley*

Belle Benchley was the world’s first woman director of a major public zoo. When she started, she knew nothing about zoos – as the divorced mother of a teenage son, she just needed a job. In 1925, she was hired as a temporary bookkeeping assistant, having no idea that she would shape the future of the world’s best-known zoo.

Belle listened to Dr. Harry’s grand plans for what was still a struggling enterprise. His vision was compelling, and Belle began to also see the Zoo’s potential. She took on more responsibilities as Dr. Harry looked on approvingly. In 1927, he made the unconventional decision to appoint her Zoo Director.

Belle had always loved animals, and she learned quickly. She was a hands-on leader and soon knew every aspect of the Zoo. She ran the operations, managed the keepers and did keeper work herself. She traversed the Zoo daily, and she knew most of the animals as individuals. A past school teacher she spoke well in public and was successful at fundraising. One of her major duties was the selling and trading of animals.

The Zoo grew—and grew up—under Belle Benchley’s care and watchful eye. When Dr. Harry died in 1941, she was stunned, and confided to one of the keepers, “I have never felt so alone in all my life.” Whether she felt confident or not, she showed great leadership in moving ahead through the frightening first weeks after Pearl Harbor, the lean years of World War II and the changing times of the early 1950s.

By the time she retired in 1953, Belle Benchley had become an institutional icon. She was given an elaborate send-off party and a three-month trip around the world. Subsequently, she was never far from her life’s work with the Zoo, continuing to give talks to community groups and visiting the Zoo often with her family. For the rest of her life, in San Diego and elsewhere, she was recognized as “The Zoo Lady.”

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

### DR. CHARLES SCHROEDER – THE ETERNAL OPTIMIST (1901 – 1991)

**“They might take Charlie out of the Zoo, but they could never take the Zoo out of Charlie.”**

*A friend of Dr. Schroeder’s*

Dr. Charles Schroeder never knew when to quit. His stubbornness transformed the Zoo and its future.

In 1932, Charlie Schroeder was a young veterinarian brimming with energy, and he threw himself into the new field of Zoo veterinary medicine with gusto. Looking for new challenges, he bounced between the East and West Coast for 20 years, working at the San Diego Zoo three different times before accepting the position of Zoo Director in 1953.

As director, Charlie was full of ideas – the flamingo exhibit, the Children’s Zoo and Skyfari were his inspirations. He established innovative moated enclosures, replacing fences with open exhibits surrounded by moats, thereby changing the face of the Zoo.

Charlie loved people, had a big smile and great laugh. But he was also an exacting taskmaster. He walked the Zoo every evening noting broken branches, chipped railings, dirty windows and untidy enclosures and dictated corrective memos to the staff. The Zoo became a thriving, efficient business under his tenure.

By the Zoo’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1966, wild habitats globally were shrinking, and species were becoming endangered. Charlie developed a new vision for the Zoo: a wildlife park with room for large groups of animals and animal breeding. He shared his dream of African savannas, villages and roaming animals with staff and community members. Some were captivated; others thought he was crazy.

He brought his wildlife park idea to the Zoo Board for a vote five times over nine years, only to be defeated each time. He withstood a barrage of criticism. He remained obstinately optimistic, some would say bullheaded. Finally, in 1969, the project was approved by the Zoo Board of Trustees and by San Diegans through Proposition B, a municipal bond to fund the park in Escondido.

Opening the San Diego Wild Animal Park in May 1972 was the crowning achievement in an already illustrious career. Praise was heaped upon “the Park that Charlie built.” Three months later, Schroeder retired. He became a respected zoo consultant nationally and internationally, and he visited the Park and Zoo for the rest of his life—often with suggestions in hand.

## **PERSONALITY PROFILE**

### **DR. HARRY M. WEGEFORTH – THE ZOO’S WIZARD (1882-1941)**

**“The world has known no more stubborn or determined man.”**

*Dr. Charles Schroeder*

With astonishing forcefulness and unabashed love for animals, Dr. Harry M. Wegeforth dedicated his life to creating the San Diego Zoo. He never deviated, persisting amid formidable challenges. His obsession to create a world-class zoo from a ragtag collection of leftover Exposition animals is legendary.

For ‘Doctor Harry’ the zoo animals were family. Born with an innate love for animals, at nine Wegeforth opened a toy animal circus in his backyard. After graduating from Baltimore Medical College as a surgeon, Wegeforth moved to San Diego and established his practice downtown. He continued treating patients for many years, utilizing his medical expertise in the treatment of animals. During his twenties, he honed his skills by observing hospital surgeries in major cities across the U.S.

But it was the fateful day of September 16, 1916 when, at the age of 34, Wegeforth heard the roar of a caged lion on Park Boulevard that changed his life forever – and changed the history of San Diego.

Fueled by his obsession, Wegeforth became manager, promoter, planner and fundraiser for his new enterprise. He studied animal care and display. He begged, borrowed and browbeat endlessly in pursuit of his goal. To feed his animals, he made forays for donated fish at the harbor, hay from farmers and discarded fruits and vegetables from produce markets. While maintaining his medical practice, he ran the zoo in his spare time on lunch hours and weekends.

He traveled to every continent in search of animals and plants to populate the Zoo: Ecuador, the Philippines, Dutch East Indies, Vietnam, Indonesia, China and India and a hazardous trip up the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers. He visited zoos around the world to emulate best practices. His voluminous diaries detail the triumphs and disappointments of these excursions – and the long lists of exotic animals he procured.

In spite of these monumental accomplishments, Doctor Harry remained by all accounts unassuming, self-effacing and eager to share his accomplishments. Under his leadership, many young people were inspired to become scientists and animal care specialists. His legacy remains establishing one of the great zoos of the world.

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

### JORGE SANCHEZ – BUS TOURS WITH A FLAIR

(Tour Bus Driver, 1987 – )

**What we're trying to teach people on our bus tours is that endangered species exist right here in our own backyard.**

**Jorge Sanchez**

Born in Mexico with Spanish as his first language, Jorge Sanchez started working at the Zoo at the age of 18. He's been educating and delighting visitors as a bus tour driver for nearly 30 years. With his affable personality, Jorge is also an informal arm of the Zoo's P.R. department, serving as translator for Spanish-language media.

Jorge's motto is Educate and Entertain: "People think they're going to see animals but they're going to end up learning something. I tell them, 'If you're not careful, you're going to learn something from this tour,'" Jorge comments wryly.

Jorge is a zealot about the Zoo's lush gardens. "What surprises visitors is the variety of plants. The plant collection is something that people don't realize the Zoo is really big on. I'm one of the loudmouths in our department about plants," he boasts.

Jorge is passionate about Conservation. "What's important is people realizing that animals and plants need our help," he explains. "People may not realize that some of these animals can be gone in the very near future. And so, we're trying to teach people on our bus tours that endangered species exist right here in our own backyard as well."

Jorge doesn't simply advocate, he converts. "I'll ask people, 'What are you doing to help out the animals?' Then I'll tell them, 'You can do this at home, you can do this at work. I'm happy if I can change one person on the big bus tour—100 people—if I can change one person, I'm very happy.'"

Jorge also does VIP tours for celebrities, dignitaries and what he calls "Zoo big wigs." Among his notable tour guests: President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn Carter and TV celebrity Jon Stewart.

Jorge fondly recalls his Betty White tour. "She is an amazing lady. And, she is such a conservation lady. She was there with her Red Vines—she loves Red Vines—and she's chewing on them as she's looking at all these animals. She was like a little kid. She wanted to see Otis, a hippo. She kept tapping me on the shoulder, 'Jorge, when are we going to go see Otis?' So of course we went to see Otis."

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

### CHARLES R. FAUST – MOAT MASTER (1922 – 2000)

**“We would just get a contractor, get out there and stomp around the field, and decide what we were going to do. And we did it. It was all a big working family.”**  
Chuck Faust, describing construction of the Wild Animal Park.

Zoo Designer Chuck Faust has been called a thoughtful and technically brilliant design artist. His imagination and creativity combined with his technical skill changed the face of the San Diego Zoo and ushered in its modern transformation beginning in the mid-1950s.

A native San Diegan, Faust was an Air Force pilot before earning his B.A. in art and industrial design from San Diego State College, first working for famed San Diego Modernist architect Lloyd Ruocco on several projects. Faust was a member of the design team for the Children’s Zoo in 1957. He also redesigned the original Scripps Flight Cage in 1958 to become the world’s first large walk-in aviary: He eliminated barriers, added waterfalls and occasional gentle rain, a result that was termed elegant. Faust’s innovative designs for the Wild Animal Park in the late 1960s were widely heralded.

But his major achievement was as designer of the Zoo’s famed moated exhibits. In fact, the Zoo’s gradual transition to moated enclosures was a product of the unstoppable fervor of Zoo Director Dr. Charles Schroeder, Faust’s enthusiastic sketching and the collaboration of virtually every Zoo department. Together, they created the “Moat Revolution” of the 1960s in which most wire animal exhibits for species like giraffes and gorillas were converted to an open-enclosure design.

Faust's talents extended beyond the Zoo; his work in the field of fine art also received wide acclaim. His drawings, oils and watercolors won numerous awards from local and national galleries; the San Diego Museum of Art has two of his paintings in their collection. The medium of sand sculpture was one of Faust's favorites. Public examples locally of his sandcasting murals included displays at the San Diego International Airport, Anthony's Fish Grotto, Union Bank and First National Bank.

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

### EDALEE ORCUTT HARWELL – GORILLA NURSE (1922 - )

#### Quote:

**“The young gorillas delighted in charging up the slide and stamping their feet to make all the noise possible.”**

**Edalee Orcutt Harwell**

Many animal lovers have devoted their lives to the San Diego Zoo. Edalee Orcutt Harwell was one such dedicated employee. She was working as a Zoo hospital secretary in 1949 when three baby western lowland gorillas arrived – Albert, Bata and Bouba, all between six and ten months old.

At that time very few baby gorillas brought into zoos lived very long, and no one had raised gorillas this young. At the age of 27 Edalee was given full-time ‘gorilla nurse’ duties. Even though she had no experience, she took on the full-time job of caring for the little trio, claiming she was “gradually trained by the gorillas themselves.”

Daily life with baby gorillas proved both rewarding and demanding. An excerpt from a 1979 article by Edalee is testimony to her affectionate care for these animals:

“The baby gorillas were treated like human infants. The gorillas lived in an upstairs room at the Zoo hospital. When they outgrew the cribs, they moved to a sunny corner room provided with individual sleeping cages and a large fenced play area, with bars for climbing. An enclosure was constructed in the hospital backyard which held tire swings, ropes, a teeter-totter and a metal slide.”

Edalee documented her caregiving duties in minute detail in three notebooks and wrote a popular monthly ZOONOOZ column, “Gorilla Notes.” Her intense devotion to the animals proved successful as they flourished and continuously delighted visitors with their antics for many years.

Over the next fifty years Edalee married, raised a family and lived abroad, but she returned to work at the Zoo several times, serving as ZOONOOZ editor, librarian and photo archivist. She truly gave a lifetime of service to the San Diego Zoo, and it has always remained close to her heart.

## **JIM GIBBONS – SAFARI PARK PLANTER (Safari Park Horticulturist, 1972-1989)**

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**During the first five months of 1972, the horticulture staff worked ten hours a day, six days a week planting approximately 500,000 trees, shrubs, flowering plants and ground covers.**

A unique refuge for wildlife, the Safari Park is also a safe haven for plant species. From towering acacias and conifers to prickly desert cacti, the Safari Park displays an amazingly diverse plant palette.

A daunting task faced Safari Park Horticulturist Jim Gibbons in 1972: turning 1,800 acres, part chaparral and part post-construction bare dirt into an African and Asian paradise within a matter of months. With great determination, Gibbons and the horticultural crew performed the remarkable job of planting, landscaping and irrigating this barren parcel of land in the San Pasqual Valley.

“I started working at the Park in January 1972,” recalled then-horticulturist Gibbons. “I knew the project was going to be large, but I was not prepared for what I saw on my first visit. We drove off the highway and into the construction area for Nairobi Village. I saw the finishing stages of construction but very little else: no walks, plants or any shade.

“My first thoughts were that a great amount of hard work and sweat would be required, especially to dig holes big enough for trees and shrubs. As fast as an area of construction was finished, in went the plants. Just before the sidewalks were poured, we realized that all the water lines to the planters were not hooked up, so work on the sidewalks was delayed while the water lines were frantically installed. We were still planting on opening day.”

Working with local garden clubs, botanical societies and specialty nurseries as well as receiving plant specimens from other countries, the Safari Park has continued to collect plants representing geographical areas all over the world. The Park’s location inland from the coast and its varied elevations lend themselves to a collection of herbaceous plants that few places in the world can duplicate, and many rare and endangered plants thrive in its environment. Dedicated horticulturists such as Jim Gibbons then and now have made this botanical preserve flourish.

## **TIMOTHY ALLER – GROWING THE ZOO GARDEN (Zoo Horticulturist, 1955 – 1970)**

**“I had to go to Los Angeles in order to buy enough plants for the expanding horticulture program.”**

**Tim Aller**

After a 24-year career in public agriculture including working with the USDA on its Mediterranean fruit fly eradication program, Tim was offered the position of Zoo Horticulturist in 1955 by Ralph Virden, then Superintendent of Grounds. He wasn't sure he wanted the job at first. He ended up staying 15 years.

During those years Aller embraced the challenge: He truly built the horticulture program from the ground up. He partitioned the Zoo into four sections, putting a gardener in charge of each section. This move along with increased plant donations vastly improved the Zoo's gardens. “The City nursery was very good about giving us excess shrubs and plants and large trees,” he recalled. Aller also developed the landscaping plans and initiated labeling both the common and the botanical name of key trees and plants, a practice that continues to this day.

Aller's dedication paid off as the Zoo horticulture program grew and flourished. The 1960s were a busy time for the expanding Horticulture Department: new landscaping projects including re-landscaping the grottos and reworking all the mesas.

There was also extensive tree work. “We had a boom truck but it wasn't quite big enough to lift some of the huge pine trees we would get from Julian through the Forest Service. The animals – the tigers and especially the bears – liked to sharpen their claws on them so the trees were good for about three to six months and then they'd been torn to pieces and needed to be replaced. “

Aller recalled one harrowing incident trying to lift one of the ponderous logs with a hired tree man and his truck: “When he tried to lift a 21-foot big log, the weight at the end of his boom was so heavy that it lifted the whole truck, and I went up with it along with a couple of other people – we all three went straight up in the air. The truck didn't fall into the dry moat fortunately. The chain broke and the log dropped where we wanted it.”