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SATURDAY, AUGUST 16, 2008

Jenny, a 32-year-old African elephant who the Dallas Zoo took in two decades ago. The zoo wants to send her to a safari park in Mexico.

PHOTO: NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE



Traumatized elephant stirs debate

Jenny, a troubled resident of the Dallas Zoo, has become the focus of an intense debate about what to do with an aging, 'special-needs' elephant

BY JAMES C. MCKINLEY JR.
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, DALLAS

Jenny has had a hard life, even by elephant standards. She was orphaned at a tender age, stolen from Africa, shipped to the US and sold to a circus, where a trainer notorious for his cruelty beat her to coerce her to perform.

When the Dallas Zoo took her in 22 years ago, she was a mess. For years, she suffered from depression and something like post-traumatic stress disorder, mutilating herself with her tusks, snapping steel cables, slamming her head into walls and requiring heavy medication.

Now, Jenny has become the focus of a boisterous debate about what to do with an aging elephant with a troubled mind. In May, after her latest companion died of heart failure, the zoo quietly made arrangements to send her to the Africam Safari Park in Puebla, Mexico, where she would be placed in a 2-hectare exhibit with another female elephant.

But that decision sparked a firestorm in Dallas. Local protesters, world-renowned elephant experts and national animal rights groups are crusading to have her sent to a roughly 1,100-hectare sanctuary in Tennessee where 17 other traumatized elephants are kept in seclusion.

"Jenny is a special-needs elephant," said Margaret Morin, a Dallas nurse who leads Concerned Citizens for Jenny. "She's unique;

she's afflicted with crippling depression. The elephant sanctuary is the right choice."

Beyond the debate about what to do with Jenny lies a national struggle between zoos and animal rights groups who, frankly, would rather see a world without elephant exhibits. The fight pits a loose coalition of elephant experts and animal rights advocates against the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, a powerful private group based in Maryland that accredits zoos in North America.

Animal rights advocates have long argued that elephants in most zoos lack enough space and, as a consequence, suffer from foot ailments, arthritis and psychological problems.

For its part, the zoo association has clung to its traditions, saying the size of an enclosure matters less than the care elephants receive from zookeepers. It has also tried to keep the 300 elephants in its network of more than 78 zoos from being sent to sanctuaries, where the zoos could no longer use them for breeding.

All of a sudden, Jenny is at the center of this conflict.

The citizens' group that Morin leads was formed this summer to hold protests in Dallas against sending Jenny to Mexico. Elephant experts across the country and national animal rights groups have also weighed in, urging that she be sent to the



A rally at the Dallas Zoo in July by a local group that wants to send Jenny to a sanctuary in Tennessee.

PHOTO: NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE

sanctuary. The City Council and the *Dallas Morning News* have been inundated with letters.

The uproar has put the Dallas Zoo on the defensive. The director, Gregg Hudson, had said in June that sending Jenny to Mexico was a done deal, but now zoo officials are backpedaling.

Mayor Thomas C. Leppert, who could cancel the plan, has artfully ridden the fence. "There is really not a position to take yet," Leppert said.

But a spokesman for the zoo, Sean Greene, said Africam Safari Park remained the zoo director's top choice. Founded in 1972, the Mexican animal park uses the same hands-off, gentle handling techniques that the Dallas Zoo adopted in 1996, after one of Jenny's worst periods. Indeed, keepers from Dallas helped train the Africam staff several years ago.

The Mexican zoo also plans to acquire another African elephant, to live with Jenny, as well as a bull

elephant in the future.

But some Dallas residents say the zoo's arguments do not hold up. The Elephant Sanctuary in Hohenwald, Tennessee, has 120 hectares just for African elephants, and Jenny, who is 32, would be the fourth to arrive, said the founder, Carol Buckley. No one except the staff visits the animals, who range freely.

"Why would we want her last years to be in a drive-through zoo in Mexico when she could have 300 acres [120 hectares] in the lush Tennessee countryside?" said Councilwoman Angela Hunt, who has visited both destinations.

Experts in the field say zoo directors are cliquish and tend to move animals to other zoos in their association rather than considering the benefits of a sanctuary, which many zoo officials see as part of an anti-zoo movement. The association can also make or break a zoo director's career.

"If we stripped everything away and say what is in the best interest of Jenny, the sanctuary would win hands down," said Les Schobert, a retired curator of animals at the Los Angeles Zoo. "But then you have to add in all the politics."

Amy Camacho, an owner and a general director of Africam, said the transfer seemed to make sense before the public outcry. The Mexican park, which was recently accredited, was seeking African elephants to strengthen

its collection, and the Dallas Zoo had a troubled elephant. There also were personal ties between officials at the two zoos.

Mike Keele, a curator at the Oregon Zoo who is also chairman of the zoo association's elephant "species survival program," signed off on the deal. "I like keeping these elephants within the AZA where they meet our standards," Keele said. "Space is just a catchphrase. It's what you do with that space."

Nonsense, say animal rights advocates. No zoo or drive-through safari park can match the peace of the Tennessee countryside.

On a recent sunny afternoon, Jenny stripped branches tossed to her by one of her keepers, Gavin Eastep, who said that Jenny's mental health had improved in recent years.

"Most of the time she's pretty calm, pretty relaxed," Eastep said.

On a bench facing the steel-cable enclosure, David and Heidi McGuire sat with their two children and marveled at Jenny's size and the graceful swing of her slow gate. "I would rather her stay in the United States," Heidi McGuire said. "You just never know what's going to happen to them down in Mexico."

Her husband, a grocer, said: "I hope they are going to get someone to replace her. I just cannot imagine a zoo without an elephant. Just sit here and watch them. They are magnificent creatures."

[SOCIETY]

Furnished Nazi bunkers found in Denmark, six decades on

The discovery in May of four World War II bunkers, untouched after 63 years under the sand, has sparked strong reactions among tourists and the local media

BY SLIM ALLAGUI
AFP, HOUVIG, DENMARK

Gripping his flashlight, Tommy Cassoe looks like Indiana Jones as he crawls out of a bunker in the sand, one of 7,000 the Nazis built along Denmark's western shores to fend off an Allied invasion.

"Mission accomplished. The bunker is empty," Cassoe exclaims, showing off his bounty on the Krylen beach to a crowd of onlookers: rusty cans, a plastic vial containing medicine in case of a mustard gas attack, and electrical cables.

This bunker and three others, entombed under the sand dunes of Houvig since 1945, were uncovered a few months ago in a violent storm, when giant waves swept away the sand, exposing glimpses of the cement and iron structures.

The discovery was "a sensation" for history buffs like Cassoe and archaeologists.

"What's so fantastic is that we found them completely furnished with beds, chairs, tables, communication systems and the personal effects of the soldiers who lived inside," says Jens Andersen, the curator of the Hanstholm museum that specializes in Nazi fortifications.

The Nazis built some 8,000 bunkers in Denmark, 7,000 of them on the western coast. They were "emptied by the Danes of their contents after World War II to salvage the scrap iron and electrical devices that were needed."

The discovery in May of the four fully furnished bunkers, untouched after 63 years under the sand, is considered "unique in Europe," according to Bent Anthonisen, a Danish expert on European bunkers.

They were located by two 9-year-old boys after they spotted a bucket in front of the entrance to one of the bunkers.

Their discovery was reported by a local newspaper, drawing the attention of Cassoe, an electrician who has been fascinated by the existence of the thousands of bunkers since childhood.

He rushed immediately to the scene, and was the first to enter the still-furnished bunkers.

"It was like entering the heart of a pyramid with mummies all around. I dug a tunnel through the sand that was blocking the entrance to the bunkers and what I saw blew me away: it was as if the German soldiers had left only yesterday," he said.

Experts and archaeologists also hastened to the scene, and, working together with Cassoe, emptied the structures within a few days of boots, undergarments, socks, military stripes, mustard and aquavit bottles, books, inkpots, stamps featuring Hitler, medicines, soda bottles, keys, hammers and other objects.

"It was a race against the clock because of the risk of looters. We lied to keep them at bay, saying that there was only one furnished bunker and that it was guarded around the clock, which wasn't true. But even so there were two attempted break-ins," Anthonisen says.

Due to the intense media coverage, the long Krylen beach peppered with bunkers has become the big attraction this summer, drawing thousands of tourists from Denmark and neighboring Germany for guided tours.

Anthonisen leads a group on a tour of one of the bunkers. Nine soldiers and their commander lived in the cramped, 20m² space for five years.

"It was surprising to see the soldiers' living conditions in the bunkers," says Ute Eichorst, a German tourist surrounded by her children and grandchildren.

The bunkers have sparked strong reactions among tourists and the local media.

"In a way, this discovery can be compared to Tutankhamun's tomb almost a century ago. It has to be preserved, and to blow up the bunkers as some have suggested would be like denying that World War II ever existed," says Ole Becher, a Dane whose grandfather was part of the resistance and who was denounced to the Gestapo toward the end of the war.

Local resident Mogens Kock Hansen disagrees, writing in the local newspaper that "everything should be blown up." He's "disgusted that people want to attract tourists to this kind of garbage."

The head of the Ringkoebing-Skjern museum, Kim Clausen, said that while the find "was not from the bronze age, what has been found is incredibly authentic and tells us a lot about how they lived in these bunkers."

All of the objects from the shelters have been taken to the conservation center at Oelgod museum, some 30km from the beach, to be examined.

The center's German curator Gert Nebrich judged the find "very interesting because it is so rare."

"We don't expect contemporary objects like these to be so well preserved. Maybe it's because they were kept for 60 years in the cold and dark like in a big vacuum," he says, carefully showing four stamps featuring Hitler's image and the German eagle.

They were used by soldiers to "send Christmas presents to their families in 1944," which consisted mostly of packets of Danish butter, Anthonisen says.

"World War II and its memories will not just go away. And discoveries like these breathe new life into the story and the fascination that still surrounds this war," the local newspaper, *Dagbladet Ringkoebing-Skjern*, wrote in an editorial recently.

That is why the bunkers need to be preserved, it said, adding: "They are part of our common European history."