

Your Turn!

Susan D. Chan*

I had only been editor of *Animal Keepers' Forum* (the professional journal of the American Association of Zoo Keepers, Inc.) for a few years when one day as I sat in my office pondering the next issue, I got a call from the main zoo office. They said I had a visitor named Sally Walker who wanted to talk to me about zoos in India. I was intrigued by this prospect and walked up towards the main part of the Topeka Zoological Park to meet her.

Little did I know then what an impact this woman would have on zoos not only in India, but also throughout South Asia. I took Sally up to my office where I learned she was on a tour of many zoos across the US talking about her newly-formed Society, Zoo Outreach Organization. As we talked I found out that Sally had originally gone to India to study Sanskrit and Yoga but had become enchanted with the country and its people, and engaged with the state of zoos in India. She saw a need for an organization that could help Indian zoos link with one another, develop more modern husbandry practices for their animal collections as well as education programs to give visitors a greater appreciation and understanding of animals.

As time went on Sally realized the extent of the task for Indian zoos by researching and publishing a list of 186 zoos in July-August, 1987 ZOOS' PRINT when the official list was 44! All these 186 zoos were government-owned except a very small handful of private zoos. At this point she changed her focus toward supporting an idea from officers in the government, an official Zoo Policy for India that was later upgraded to zoo legislation. ZOO with its publications and projects could be a support and conveyor of modern zoo practice and trends but little more than that. In the end, when legislation was passed over 400 zoos registered with the new Central Zoo Authority. After serving as a Member of the Central Zoo Authority for six years, Sally turned all her attention to the other countries of South Asia which needed similar help.

She had founded two publications, one basically a compendium of previously published information needed by all zoos called ZOO ZEN and a feature magazine called ZOOS' PRINT that coincided with the founding of ZOO, and would provide Indian zoo personnel a venue to publish information about their animals, about research, husbandry, training and enrichment. ZOOS' PRINT also contained information about conservation efforts for India's threatened species. This was the first of its kind publication in the country and had an important impact on how zoo personnel viewed their work as well as giving a greater voice to conservationists.

As an editor myself, I understand well the intensity and required hard work to produce a monthly journal. When I first started as the *Forum* editor for

AAZK in 1981, there was already an existing network of keepers, curators and others who contributed articles and other materials for AKF. For Sally and ZOOS' PRINT had to build a network from scratch, and Sally herself admits to having to write much of the publication's material during those first early years, and even now! But over time, the Z.O.O. Crew has built a vast network of colleagues worldwide who appreciate the value of these publications and their ability to not only provide vital information but also to establish a system of networking and cooperation between previously isolated zoos

The success of ZOOS' PRINT was underpinned by ZOO ZEN which was a compendium of useful but hard to obtain material already published – while ZOOS' PRINT also was not shy to use reprinted material if it was useful, ZOO ZEN was a whole journal of thematic reprints! Over the years AAZK has granted Z.O.O. permission to also reprint material from *Animal Keepers' Forum*, AAZK Conference Proceedings and special resource publications like the *Resources for Crisis Management for Zoos & Other Animal Care Facilities*. We welcomed this opportunity to share the information and resources we had available through AAZK.

While we may be separated by many miles, customs and cultures – the bottom line is we all have a passion for wildlife and want to see it protected and well cared for in our zoological facilities. Networking and information sharing are certainly ways in which we all make that important connection.

The accomplishments over the past 25 years of Z.O.O. have been an amazing legacy that Sally, Sanjay, Latha, Daniel, Marimuthu, and all others connected with this fine organization will leave to the future naturalists, conservationists and zoo staff members throughout South Asia.

I applaud all Z.O.O.'s efforts and wish them the greatest of continued success for the next 25 years. My admiration for Sally, her colleagues at ZOO and all of their accomplishments would be difficult, if not impossible, to put into words. The passion and commitment demonstrated by Z.O.O. staff have remained an inspiration to me over the years. Although we don't get a chance to see each other often, I will always count Sally Walker as a good friend, a fellow editor, and a person whose obvious love for India, its people and its wildlife is evident in everything she does.

Congratulations on a job very well done and here's to a future of much continued success!

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