

Bunny the elephant was always a lady

By Ron Young

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In the 44 years that Bunny the elephant lived in the Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden, she was treated kindly by some and abused by others. She, however, was always a lady.

In my 35-year zoo career I worked with many elephants and many elephant handlers.

One man, Alan Campbell, worked for me at the Baton Rouge Zoo in the early 1980s. I contracted with him to come to Evansville and work with our staff to help them better work with Bunny and then Digger, a small African elephant we had brought in as a friend for Bunny.

Many elephants are not kind and many are not treated kindly. In fact, Campbell was later killed by an elephant in Hawaii while working with a circus.

Bunny, however, never thrashed out at anyone in the entire time she lived here. She was the most gentle elephant I have ever come across.

I hope she has long ago forgiven us for all the ignorant things we put her through in her life.

One of the most social animals in the world was forced to live most of her life apart from her own kind.

There are many people in this town who wanted to have me drawn and quartered for moving Bunny out of Evansville. But even though it ultimately cost me my job as zoo director, it will always be the best thing that I ever did in my career.

I always sleep well knowing how much better her last 10 years have been.

Bunny was a special elephant and she was easy to love. I have one of her framed footprints on my wall to cherish.

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