

L.A. Zoo Statements Regarding Gita's Health Juxtaposed with Information from Zoo Clinical Records Reflecting Actual Health Status

“Richard Lichtenstein – Asked Mr. Lewis if our elephants are happy and healthy. Mr. Lewis responded we think they are.”

Minutes, Meeting of the Board of Zoo Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles,
August 16, 2005

[Clinical records had already indicated erosion of bone in Gita's left front foot. Osteomyelitis was noted.]

“So yes, Gita does have a current condition in her left front foot.”

Dr. Greer, **Minutes, Meeting of the Board of Zoo Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles,** September 20, 2005

"Due to their care and attention, our [elephants] thrive physically and psychologically."

John Lewis, **Minutes, Meeting of the Board of Zoo Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles,** September 20, 2005

[Gita underwent surgery on September 23, 2005, to remove two-thirds of the bone in one toe due to severe infection (osteomyelitis) that already had caused bone to rot away in the foot.]

Kovacik reported that zoo officials continue to say that “Gita is OK” and is doing well.

<http://www.nbc4.tv/news/5061445/detail.html?rss=la&psp=news>

Activists Call For Sanctuary For Ailing Zoo Elephant

NBC-TV News, October 5, 2005

[See below]

"She's doing fabulously," said Greer, adding that Gita is getting round-the-clock postoperative care... Although Greer said she couldn't guarantee that Gita would live to 70 — the average age for female Asian elephants in captivity in North America is 36, according to zoo officials — she scoffed at the notion that Gita was certain to die in the next few years, even though she considers her an elderly elephant. "I don't have a crystal ball," she said. "Maybe the activists do."

Activists Urge Zoo to Release Ailing Elephant to Sanctuary

Los Angeles Times, October 6, 2005

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-zoo6oct06,1,5624583.story?ctrack=1&cset=true>

[Veterinary records show that Gita was not "doing fabulously." She was experiencing colic due to use of opioids related to her surgery and lack of movement. At one point (Sept. 30) there was concern because it "appeared like she was going to go down." Gita was treated with pain killing drugs for colic through Oct. 6.]

The LA Zoo Director John Lewis says Gita's health is improving. He says two specialists from UC Davis examined the elephant on Tuesday, and said her foot wound continues to improve. Lewis said reports that Gita is “near death” are simply untrue.

LA Zoo Director Says Reports Of Gita Elephant's Health Untrue

NBC-TV News, November 16, 2005

<http://www.nbc4.tv/news/5339424/detail.html>

[While Gita is considered to be clinically doing well, per an independent veterinarian it is impossible to tell if there is continued infection in the bone of the left foot. This would require deep biopsies that could cause further damage.]

The director of the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens blasted game show host Bob Barker for labeling the zoo's elephants as miserable and sick and said the pachyderms were healthy and would remain at the zoo.

"I want to reassure people that our elephants are fine," Lewis said. "They are not near death. They are not going crazy."

Zoo Won't Send Pachyderms Packing, Blasts Barker

CBS-TV, February 11, 2006

http://cbs2.com/topstories/local_story_042183628.html

[Gita developed an abscess on her "right rump" in January "where she leans up against the bars." Daily rotation of intravenous antibiotic and antifungal drugs continues for treatment of left front foot.]

"MR. LEWIS: No, she's not suffering. If anything she's spoiled rotten."

L.A. Zoo Under Pressure to Retire Its Elephants

National Public Radio - All Things Considered, March 10, 2006

[Daily foot treatments continue.]

"Gita continues to do well and her foot continues to heal."

John Lewis, **Minutes, Meeting of the Board of Zoo Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles**, March 21, 2006

[Gita is now being treated for a large abscess above her tail.]

Zoo officials insist that Gita sailed through a radical state-of-the-art veterinary surgery and has emerged free of disease.

"Weekly X-rays indicate her foot appears to be healed," says L.A. Zoo director John Lewis.

Gita's Really on a Stroll

Los Angeles Times, May 9, 2006

<http://www.latimes.com/news/print/edition/california/la-me-gita9may09,1,860376.story?coll=la-headlines-pe-california>

[Gita is still being treated with a regular rotation of antibiotic and antifungal drugs related to her foot and continued presence of dangerous bacteria. Large tail abscess still being treated. New abscess on right hindquarters appears on May 5.]

"We actually had thought her foot problems were healed, so as a result, she wasn't on 24-hour observation," Lewis said. "We were very surprised she was down that morning."

Zoo Officials: Gita Elephant Seen Sitting Before Her Death

NBC-TV News, June 30, 2006

<http://www.nbc4.tv/news/9456554/detail.html>

[Gita had refused to let anyone treat her left front foot in the week prior to her death. She had multiple abscesses (one so large a vet put an arm into it), experienced increasing

swelling down her backside and along her stomach, and now had to wear a boot on her right foot due to undermining of the sole. Swelling is thought "likely due to her resting her rear and getting weight shift done against the facility bars/railings." This is likely an attempt to relieve her painful front feet and joints.]

"We were watching her 24 hours, seven days a week for nearly a year," explains Lewis. "Based on her improvement, we quit doing that. Her foot was better, she was getting fewer treatments, and so several months before she died, we had actually stopped the 24/7 observation."

That's Entertainment

L.A. Citybeat, July 13, 2006

<http://www.lacitybeat.com/article.php?id=4023&IssueNum=162>

[The extended hours of monitoring began in late September 2005 after Gita's foot surgery and ended in late April, 2006 – a period of seven months. Treatments were reduced from a daily rotation to every other day in late April.]