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A photograph of a man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a light-colored polo shirt, looking towards the right. He is standing behind a chain-link fence. On the other side of the fence, a camel is visible, leaning its head towards the man. The scene is set outdoors with trees in the background. The overall tone is warm and affectionate.

The Animals'

Best

Charlie Faust's favorite San Diego Zoo denizen, a camel named Barney, used to ruin many a good shirt with his playful slobbering.



San Diego Zoo
legend

Charlie Faust


devoted more than
three decades
to designing
an environment that
put the animals first

By Terry L. Wilson

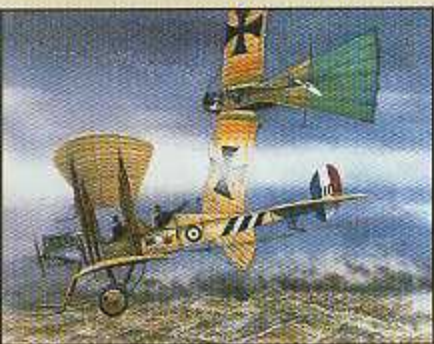
ON THE EVENING OF MAY 18, a pall fell over the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park. Devoted animal lover Charlie Faust, the man who forever changed the way the world would view its exotic creatures in captivity, died in his sleep that night at age 78.

For 33 years, Faust was the architectural design director for the zoo and the Wild Animal Park. It was through his vision that the animals were freed from their cages and given a wide-ranging, more natural environment in which to live.

Friend



The petting paddock in the Children's Zoo is where happy kids can get face-to-fur with the likes of Nubian goats.



His Artwork Lives On

AFTER RETIRING from the San Diego Zoo, Charlie Faust opened Faust Sand Casting in Ocean Beach with his son, Rolfe. Together, they created a potpourri of images that brought the duo honors and accolades from around the globe.

In addition to turning sand into art, Faust continued to apply his pens, pencils, watercolors and oils to a variety of subjects. His last work was a series of 20 watercolor paintings depicting World War I dogfights.

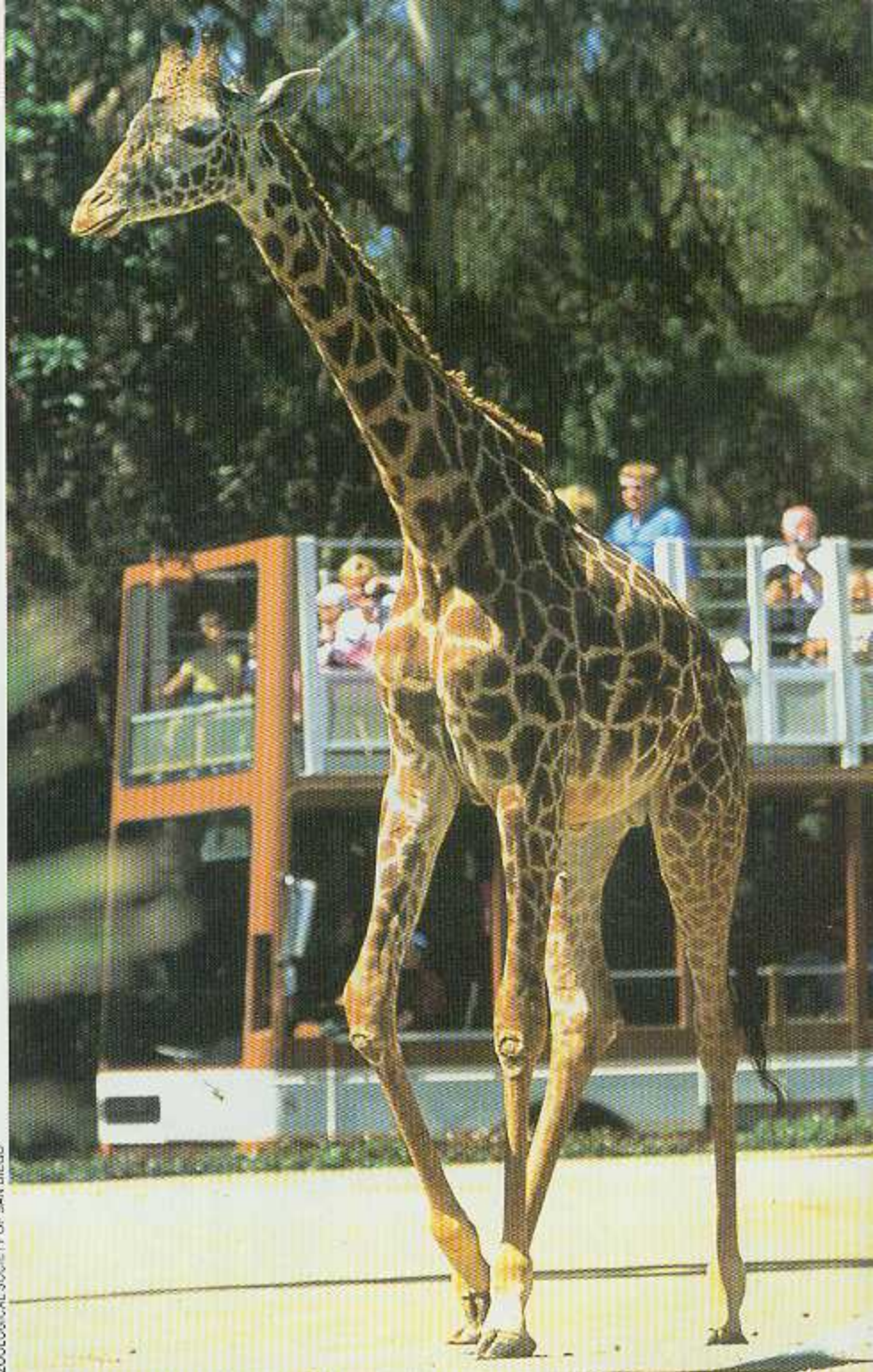
Faust was also a man of the west, which is richly reflected in his numerous paintings, drawings and sculptures of a time when six-shooters ruled and "Home on the Range" was a way of life. One drawing took an incredible 20 years to complete. Using only pencils, the master artist brought to life a Sioux buffalo spirit ceremony.

During Faust's trips to Africa, he captured the innocence of the Dark Continent. With pad and brush, he immortalized stunning moments in time. From exotic animals and native village life to Zulu warriors in full battle garb, Faust was able to capture the essence of Africa in his paintings.

For the first time, a limited number of Faust's paintings, drawings and sandcasts are available for purchase by the general public. Phone 619-224-7658 for prices and information.



Rolfe and Charlie Faust



ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SAN DIEGO

A giraffe runs in an open pen at the zoo, observed by a guided bus tour.

"One of the first things I wanted to do was get rid of the cages, but to do that we had to create pits and moats to keep the animals from eating the visitors."



Waterbucks seem oblivious to the Wgasa Bush Line railway at the San Diego Wild Animal Park.

“What we did was jail the people and let the animals loose.”

“I got my start by working on the Children’s Zoo,” recalled Faust in one of his last interviews. “I wanted to try something really different. I wanted to actually take the kids into an area where they could interact with the animals. This had never been done before, and there was a lot of opposition to it at the time. But when we opened, the Children’s Zoo was an immediate success. I scaled everything to kid-size. We purposely made it so adults would have to duck to get through doors and such. The kiddies loved it.”

Faust’s work was so well-received that a new position was created specifically for him in 1957. As the first-ever architectural design director for the San Diego Zoo, he set out to give the old zoo a facelift. In the process, he made architectural history.

“One of the first things I wanted to do was get rid of the cages,” said Faust. “But to do that, we had to create pits and moats to keep the animals from eating the visitors. So I had to find out things like: How far can a gorilla jump? Well, who the heck knows how far a gorilla can jump except another gorilla? We wanted to make sure that if he *did* jump, he’d miss what ever he was grabbing at by several feet. The way we learned about these things was by trial and error.”

In the process of creating these innovations, Faust and his team discovered many animal behavioral traits that experts study

to this day. One of the lessons learned became known as “flight distance.” This is the amount of space an animal feels it needs between itself and a potential predator to either avoid being attacked or to escape safely.

Another chapter was written in the annals of animal behavior when Faust discovered a giraffe wouldn’t step over a 3-foot wall, not even for food. This allowed him to break down the barriers between the giraffes and the visitors.

“After tearing down the fences, we dug a 3-foot moat around the giraffe enclosure, and not once did any of them ever get out,” recalled Faust. “We were the first to do it, but now that barrier is used by zoos everywhere.”

Faust also changed the route the bus tours took. Instead of a straight route through the park, he put a new twist in the road. His serpentine road was like the ones he’d traveled in Africa. Around each twist and turn, he planted a variety of trees and exotic plants native to the regions of Africa where each specific animal lived.

“Something else we did that had never been done before was to mix the animals,” explained Faust. “I wanted the visitors to have an idea of what it’s really like in Africa. Of course, we were careful not to put any animals together that would hurt each other, but other than that, it was pretty realistic.”

continued on page 208

In the process of giving the zoo a new look, Faust became a good friend to the critters who lived there. "My best pal at the zoo was a camel named Barney," he recalled. "I'd known him ever since he was a little camel at the Children's Zoo. Barney would see me coming, and he'd run over to the edge of the moat and wait for me to scratch his head. Many an

afternoon I'd wander over to his cage and we'd hang out together.

"Barney followed me around like a puppy dog. He liked to hang his head over my shoulder and slobber all over my shirt. He ruined a lot of shirts, but that was okay. I really liked that camel; we sure had some real good times together."

In his declining years, the once-reasonable camel developed some sexual habits zoo officials thought might offend visitors, so Barney was banished to the isolation of the back lot. Unfortunately, this location was a long way from Faust's office, so Barney's human pal wasn't able to visit him as frequently as in the past. Several weeks had gone by when Faust decided to take a drive over to see how Barney was getting along. It was a wet and stormy day, and when Faust got to the back lot, what he saw made him angry.

"I couldn't believe my eyes. There was my good pal Barney standing in the mud and rain, soaking wet," Faust recalled. "He didn't even have an enclosure to call home. So I charged into the zoo director's office and told him flat out that my department was going to stop everything we were doing and design Barney a retirement home.

"I told him in no uncertain terms that it was a disgrace for the world's best zoo to be treating an animal like that. End of discussion. I pulled my entire department off their jobs, and we spent about five days designing Barney a house with a good floor, a nice roof, a dry feed trough and hay for him to lie down in. We even added an exercise yard. And by golly, the zoo built it for him."

AFTER DESIGNING the world's greatest zoo, Faust again did something never done before. His talents and imagination turned a simple idea into a one-of-a-kind animal park that would draw critical acclaim from around the world.

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