

Chapter 2

Yuanshan Zoo during Post-World War II 1945-1986

After the end of World War II, the government of the Republic of China took over Taiwan. Because of the war, the Zoo lost many precious animals, and while the lack of funding for renovation, “Animal Performances” became the dawn of rebuilding the Zoo. Large events and cheap ticket prices brought at most 3,000,000 annual visitors, making the Zoo a paradise for citizens. However, under the business model featuring the animal performances, Yuanshan Zoo could only be said as a pre-modern zoo. The turning point where the Zoo headed towards modernization started in 1974, when it decided to move to the present site today in Muzha. It started to include the four major functions of modernized zoo: recreation, education, research, conservation, into its development goals, and until 1986, the 12 years before officially moving the zoo, it is an important turning point for the Taipei Zoo entering into modernization.



Image Source: Provision by Taipei City Archives

Reconstruction and Animal Performances

On February 2nd, 1946, Yuanshan Zoo reopened the gates that were closed due to the war. And at this time, because of the beasts that have been killed towards the end of the war, only an Asian elephant and a lion were left, and a large number of medium and small-sized animals also disappeared during the switch of political powers. Until the beginning of 1948, there were only 49 species, 183 animals (excluding fish), the number of species and quantity was only a third of that during the latter part of the Japanese Period. When the “228 Massacre” happened in 1947, there were even some animals that starved to death. And because of funding constraints, on one hand, Yuanshan Zoo publicly requested for rare animals and birds, and on the other hand, accepted the meat that research institutes had done experiments on for the use of the consumption of animals within the Zoo.

With the lack of wild beasts and also unable to enrich its contents, Yuanshan Zoo during early postwar lacked anything worth seeing. The number of admission for the first three years reached at most only 100,000 people. In order to attract more people to visit the zoo, “Animal Performances” were scheduled to debut during the most withering period for the Zoo.

In January of 1948, Yuanshan Zoo included “Training Animal Performance Techniques” into the work plan, and in June of the same year, keeper Ching-zhi Tsai, who later became quite representative in training for animal performances, entered to serve at the Zoo, and immediately six months after, during the Chinese New Year period in 1949, animal performances were arranged five days in a row, and all the beasts were placed onto the stage in this performance. On the New Year’s Day in 1950, the Zoo continued animal performances for three days, and since then, at almost all major festivals and holidays, such as New Year’s Day, Chinese New Year, Children’s Day, the birthday anniversaries of Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen, there have been large animal performances at Yuanshan Zoo, and towards the end of 1950, one animal performance has been fixed and arranged for each

Sunday morning and afternoon.

The direct influence of the regular animal performances was the massive influx of visitors on Sundays and during holidays. In 1948, the number of zoo visitors was not more than 100,000, in 1952, it was more than 400,000, in 1955, it reached 700,000, and while in 1964, it was the first time exceeding 1,000,000. With the admission of the visitors, the Taipei City Government set aside more funds for the purchase of rare animals, and some of the newly purchased beasts, through training, also entered the ranks of animal performances. In the spring and autumn seasons in 1952, the Zoo inputted many beasts and many large-sized animals from Thailand, including the female Asian elephant “Malan” that we are familiar with, Asian elephant Lin Wang’s partner, she was trained immediately to walk the quincuncial piles after coming to the Zoo.

While the number of visitors increased rapidly, the number and species of animals also increased. Using the number of breeding species of mammals and birds as a standard, compared to the early re-opening, the Zoo has been enriched a lot in 1955, and, in 1971, it was not far from how it was during the end of Japanese rule. It could be said that Yuanshan Zoo is having a smooth recovery and is stepping back on track once again.

The key person in training the animal performances is the keeper Ching-zhi Tsai, Ching-zhi Tsai headed to Japan to learn about the training of beasts during the Japanese Period, and has served in the zoos in Japan and Korea. In June of 1948, Chen-tung Lien recommended him to enter and work at Yuanshan Zoo, and he became Yuanshan Zoo Director in 1957 up until 1970. Ching-zhi Tsai was quite outstanding in training animal performances; during his term as the director, he expanded the animal shows into becoming the feature of Yuanshan Zoo. Up until 1970, Yuanshan Zoo could be described as the “Era of Ching-zhi Tsai” or the “Era of Animal Performances.”

Aside from animal performances, many events were held also during postwar Yuanshan Period, among which the animal-naming events and seeking nursing mothers for newborn animals received the most resonance with the public, and these activities all played the



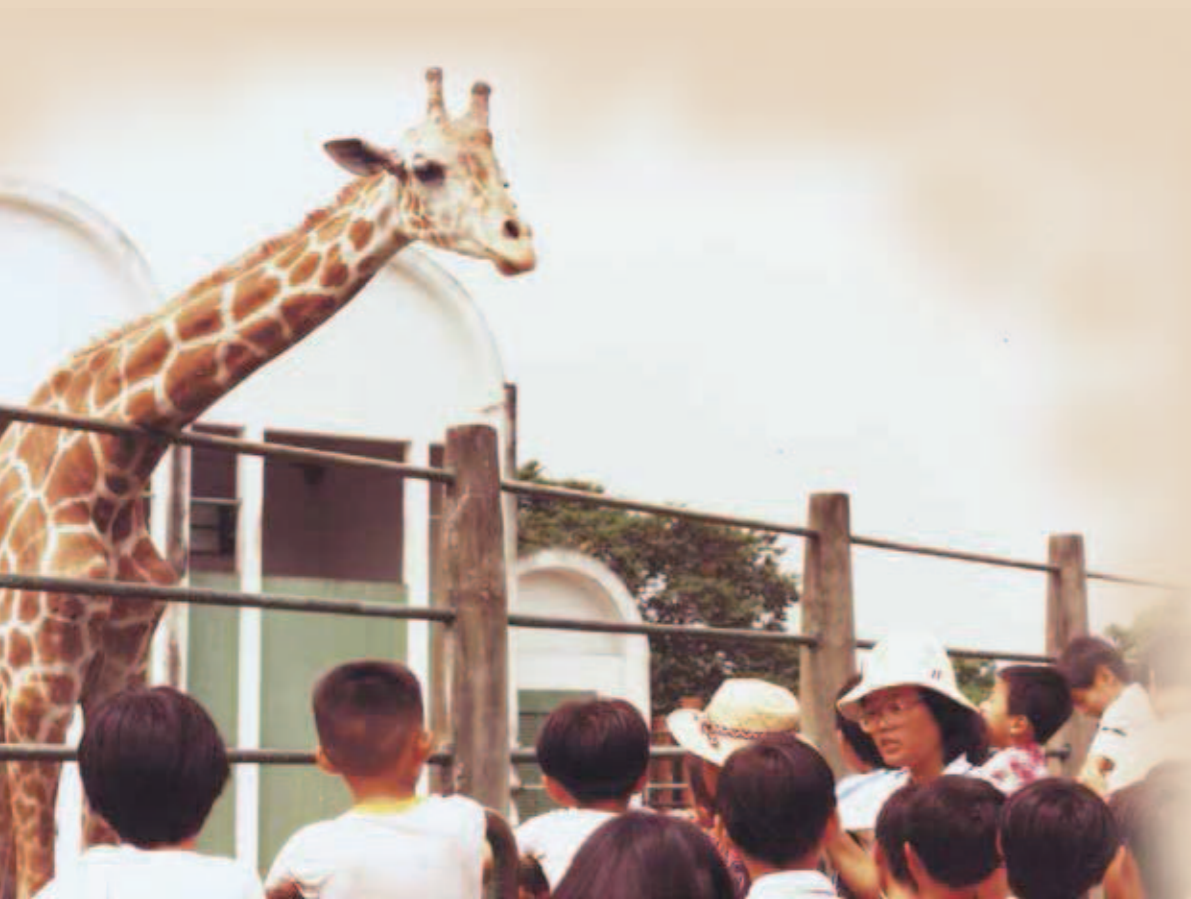
The crowd coming to watch the animal performances during the holidays. Even under the hot sun, the performance site was still surrounded by and packed with visitors

Image Source: *Taipei Pictorial*, provision by Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government



Ching-zhi Tsai and the female Asian elephant Malan that once performed walking the quincuncial piles

Image Source: Special Collection of Taipei Zoo History



In 1958, the Zoo purchased giraffes for the first time and held an animal-naming event; this is the first animal-naming event that Yuanshan Zoo held after the war. There were people that only wrote "To: Miss Giraffe" on the envelope, and the postman actually delivered it to the Zoo

Image Source: Special Collection of Taipei Zoo History



Animal photo-shooting competition and holding naming event for the newborn tiger cubs

Image Source: Taipei Zoo, *Overview of Taipei Zoo*. Special Collection of Taipei Zoo History