

# Zoos may save species from threat of extinction

By DIANA DeHAVEN  
Staff Writer

RACINE — "The number of endangered species is growing every year, and the zoo may very well be the last place on earth for these animals," said Jean Rhoades, wife of the director of the Racine Zoo.

Zoos have been around for thousands of years, and up until the past quarter century their primary purpose was scientific study.

Today there are more than 1,000 zoos in the world, many established early in the 20th Century when, like the circus bearded lady and dwarfs, wild animals were used for public spectacle and profit.

Though zoos may well be for public spectacle and profit, according to Mrs. Rhoades, they are serving an increasingly important role in preserving wildlife.

Since the 17th Century, 85 species of birds and 50 species of mammals have become extinct, and the number of endangered species is increasing annually.

"Zoos are now serving an important function by protecting and breeding endangered animals. Zoos are really the only safe place to preserve them," she said.

"There has been an upsurge in the interest in zoos lately and more concern about good living conditions for the animals," Mrs. Rhoades said. "People are caring more because they are realizing they are looking at animals which may not be around in 20 years. They are worth preserving."

Bars and cages cause public hostility, so most zoos strive for an "open" concept, an open area with some kind of enclosure, such as a moat or tall fence. The space creates as natural a habitat as possible for the animals.

Zoos are also becoming more education-conscious.

"THEY ARE AN EXCELLENT source for learning first-hand about animals," she said. "There are a terrific number of things which can be learned; for example, the concepts of hibernation and camouflage," she said.

Mrs. Rhoades makes frequent visits to schools in Racine and Kenosha, often with a small animal in tow, and explains the habits of the zoo animals.

Her husband, Louis, has been director of the Racine Zoo for three years. He is involved in a long-range plan of revamping existing exhibits and planning new ones. All new exhibits will be the "open" concept with indoor shelters for the cold winter.

"This zoo was built in 1923 and needs more up dating and revamping," said Mrs. Rhoades. "Some of the



Kenosha News photo by Marshall Simonsen

Jean Rhoades, wife of the director of the Racine Zoo, holds Freddie, a playful, 10-week-old albino ferret, which she uses as part of her educational program for students. She has also used woodchucks, snakes and baby leopards in her program.

animals are still kept in cages, and they need bigger areas."

Mrs. Rhoades, a registered nurse, has been working with animals since she was married 15 years ago.

"He runs the show, but I've raised countless baby animals," she said.

"I've raised 48 tigers, 35 lions, seven or eight small llamas, two bears and several leopards, deer, racoons and jaguars."

"It's imperative that baby animals be hand raised, because when animals are sold to another zoo, hand raised animals are always preferred. They are much easier to handle," she said.

She has nursed a number of sick and rejected baby animals, too.

"I've taken some sick ones right into bed with me, because I didn't know what else to do. It was either do that or let them die."

"These animals are just like little human babies. I've had people come to me and ask about buying an animal for a pet, but once I explain what the care entails, like feedings from a bottle every four hours, they turn around and

run the other way."

The Racine zoo has two nurseries, and when Mrs. Rhoades is not visiting school children, she can usually be found there. If an animal needs special care, she will take it home at night where she has two incubators.

"YOU CAN NEVER fully domesticate a wild animal, no matter how cute and cuddly they are when they are babies," she said. "And they are adorable."

"But when a tiger gets to be seven months old and weighs 80 pounds, you know what they are capable of. It's not worth taking a chance. You can't even tame a raccoon, and people who think they can are just fooling themselves."

She said animals never completely overcome their killer instinct, even if they are declawed and defanged. The tragedy of declawing and defanging is that no zoo will take the animal if the owner finds it unmanageable.

"No zoo will take it because it will not be able to protect itself from other animals. Then the only alternative is to put it to sleep."

## WHERE-WHAT-WHEN

You'll want to check this section each week to know what's playing at the theatre, what's featured at the museum, what activities are available for your enjoyment, or what restaurant suits your fancy for a snack or dinner.

### Don't call her half-pint

By ANDEE BECK

Melissa Gilbert would like us to know, "I'm not a half-pint anymore. I'm a three-quarter-pint."

She'd also like her "Little House on the Prairie" writers and producers to get the message that she's growing up. And though she bears no malice, Melissa says, "I kinda want to grow up a little more on the show. I'm 14, but my character Laura is still 12."

She figures some steps in the right direction would be "taking Laura's hair out of those braids" — a source of aggravation for the freckled urchin since she grew a "quarter-pint" — "and she could fall in love with her future husband. Laura Ingalls Wilder was 14 when she was married," Melissa says of the "Little House on the Prairie" authoress whose autobiographical series of books are the basis of the NBC series.

But even if those developments do occur, and the focus of the show (which this season shifted away from Melissa to "foster son" Matthew Labortaux) is once again on the "three-quarter-pint" performer, Ms. Gilbert is sure she'll be no closer to achieving her colleagues' recognition.

"I'd like to win an Emmy," she informs, "but I've never been nominated. And that's because nobody in the industry watches the show."

How does she know for sure? "If you walk up to anybody on the street and ask them if they watch 'Little House,' they'll say yes. If you ask anybody in the industry if they watch the show, they'll say no. I know that because it happens all the time."

Clearly the only reason the industry shuns the show, insists Melissa, is because "it's just too wholesome. Instead, they're watching 'Charlie's Angels,' 'Family' and detective shows."

"I don't care," she states an instant later, "because the public watches us and that's the only thing that's important. That's what we're in the business for — to please the public — and they seem to be pleased."

According to the Nielsen ratings this season, Ms. Gilbert's point is well taken. But really, her attention isn't riveted on such matters.

Relaxing in red bathing suit and jogging shorts on beach of a Malibu home Melissa and family are renting for a month, Melissa fields questions as she claims to tackle three-foot breakers while body surfing.

"Ooh, look at that one," she points out, one hand shielding her eyes from the afternoon glare. "That's the best kind of wave right there. I jump in the middle."

"What were we talking about? Oh, yeah, the scripts for the rest of the season. Oh, you know. They'll just generally be about helping people find faith."

She excuses herself to forage for potato chips and a soft drink in the kitchen, and when she returns, she comments, "I used to be a sugar addict. Now I have three fillings. My last dentist was a Novocain freak. I swear to God. I told him if he tried to give it to me once more I'd throw up on him."

Later: "I went to Paris early this summer, just to vacation, to visit a friend. The flight was scary, very turbulent," exclaims the actress who, in the retelling of her story, seems quite nonplussed. "Suzanne Somers was on the plane, too. I only knew her vaguely. I said, 'This plane isn't going to crash. Suzanne Somers is on the plane!' And the funny thing was, she said she was saying the plane wouldn't crash because Melissa Gilbert was on it."

She yawns, slaps her hand to her mouth to shield her three fillings politely, then apologizes. "Oh, pardon me. I was up until three o'clock playing jacks. I get all giggly when I'm tired, you know, like how some people get when they're drunk." She is in the midst of a week-long "Prairie" hiatus, she explains, but ordinarily she's in bed at an hour befitting a typical 14-year-old.

watch my baby sister."

And go to public school when the series is on spring hiatus. Though she is the recipient of an impressive amount of fan mail, among her peers Melissa reports, "I'm not very popular. To be popular you have to be one of those kind — well, there's the nice kid and the not-so-nice kind and the bad girls. The nice girls aren't popular because they don't date 18-year-old guys."

"But who needs to be popular? Just be yourself and if people don't like you, tough. Yeah, everybody's nice to me at school, but everybody gets invited to parties except me."

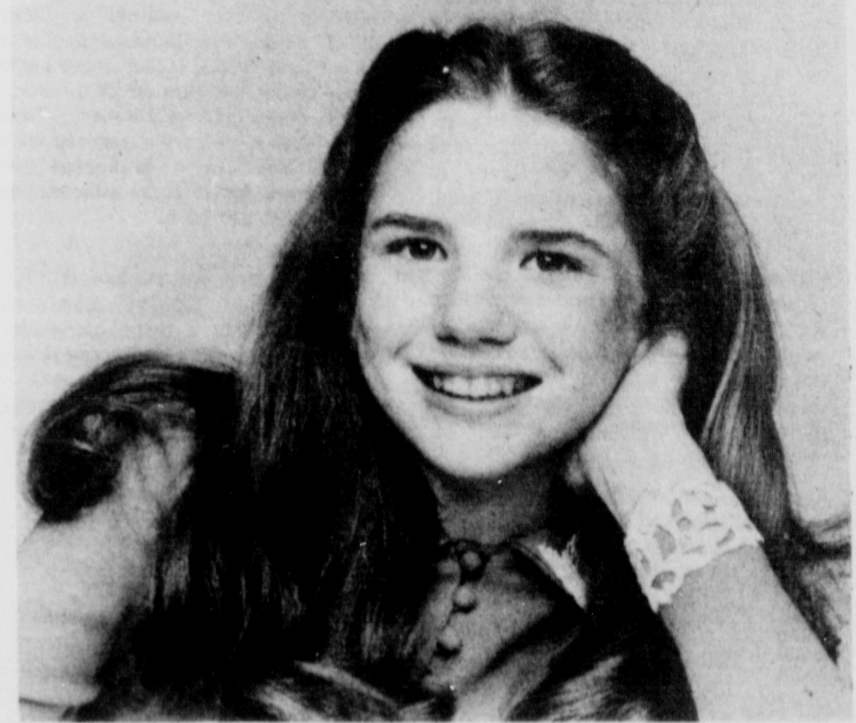
She shrugs the subject aside, as she is wont to do with most discussions

other than those dealing with the charms of teen actor Scott Baio or the credibility in fortune telling with playing cards.

"What would I like to see happen this year? Well," she replies, cracking her knuckles in mid-sentence, "I'd like to fall in love — I mean on the show. And I want a dog — at home, I mean. Do I want to fall in love in real life? I wouldn't mind. But I really want a dog more than anything."

"Most of all though," Melissa remarks with great resolve, "I'd like my character on 'Little House' to grow up. I'm not a kid any more. I am, but I'm not. I'm actually a young lady."

Just a fraction away from being a whole pint.



Melissa Gilbert

### Come one and all: you are invited to Charlie's trial

Charles A. Olson has issued an invitation to his trial.

Olson, operator of Imperial Rug and Furniture Dry Cleaners, 6308 24th Ave., and one-time American Party candidate for Kenosha County district attorney, has sent the printed invitations to his ideologically-committed supporters throughout the Midwest.

He was charged in October, for the second time, with operating a business without the seller's permit required by state law. He was convicted of a similar charge by a County Court jury on Oct. 26, 1976, and was fined \$100 and costs by Judge Michael Fisher.

Olson's invitation urges supporters to:

Come, listen and witness  
12-person jury trial  
State of Wisconsin, plaintiff  
vs. Charles A. Olson, defendant  
Thursday, Jan. 4, 1979, 9 a.m.

Before Hon. Judge John E. Malloy

Kenosha County Court House

Olson not only declines to collect Wisconsin's sales tax, he also protests the court system is unconstitutional and is dominated by a "lawyer-aristocracy" that thwarts the rights of the people.

At his first trial two years ago, more than a score of Charlie's supporters came to witness what they hoped would be a victory of the people over politicians, solid citizens over "the Commies."

There were those in the courtroom audience who muttered against communism, the Jews and Judge Fisher, whom one supporter urged, "should be hung for treason."

On Jan. 4, Charlie Olson, in the words of his invitation, "defending himself, pro se," will return to a state court for trial.

<b>BEST BUYS OF THE WEEK</b> <b>TOWN 'N' COUNTRY LIQUORS</b> 7531 45th Ave. Daily & Saturday 9 A.M. to 9 P.M. Sunday 9 A.M. to 6 P.M.	<b>J. BAVET</b> FINE BRANDY —QUARTS..... <b>\$4.99</b>	<b>OLD STYLE</b> 12 OZ. 6-PAK ..... NO-RETURN BOTTLES 12-PAK ... <b>\$1.49</b> <b>\$2.89</b>
	<b>Sunnyside Club</b> 7517-22nd Avenue Store Hours: Daily 8 A.M. to 2 A.M.	

<b>SEAGRAM'S 7-CROWN</b> BLENDED WHISKEY QUARTS <b>\$5.69</b>	<b>CANADIAN CLUB</b> CANADIAN WHISKEY —QUARTS <b>\$7.99</b>	<b>PETRI BRANDY</b> 1.75 LITERS <b>\$8.59</b>
<b>NIKOLAI VODKA</b> 1.75 LITERS <b>\$7.19</b>	<b>FLEISCHMANN'S PREFERRED</b> BLENDED WHISKEY QUARTS <b>\$5.19</b>	<b>DRAGONE LAMBRUSCO</b> FIFTH..... <b>\$1.59</b> MAG..... <b>\$3.15</b>
<b>WINE OF THE WEEK</b> WEDDING VEIL WINE WHITE GERMAN WINE 4/5 QUART SAVE \$1.00 REG. 3.49 <b>\$2.49</b>	<b>CHATEAU LA SALLE</b> BY CHRISTIAN BROS. 4/5 QUART <b>\$1.99</b>	<b>GALLO WINE</b> * PINK CHABLIS * RHINE —3 LITERS— <b>\$4.99</b>
<b>SPECIAL EXPORT</b> 6-PAKS..... <b>\$1.79</b>	<b>STROH'S</b> 8-7-OZ. NO-RETURNS..... <b>\$1.39</b>	<b>OLD MILWAUKEE.....</b> <b>\$3.99</b> <b>BLACK LABEL.....</b> <b>\$3.99</b> <b>FOX DELUXE.....</b> <b>\$2.99</b>
<b>SCHLITZ BEER</b> 12-PAKS..... <b>\$2.89</b>		

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 Resv. Please  
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**\$1.69**  
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 \* Mashed potatoes/gravy  
 \* Cole slaw  
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**Kentucky Fried Chicken**  
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