

THE Event

NEWS, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT Since 1981 VOL. 15, NO. 8 SEPTEMBER 14-27, 1995

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SHOWDOWN IN SUGAR HOUSE





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ticipate in a legally sanctioned union (I don't share that prejudice), but my oversimplified view that opposition in this community comes primarily from the dominant culture.

What I realized after reading of Pace's own struggles with her timidity is that any of us who believe we have unpopular convictions on

practices made legal. In other words they want to legalize sodomy. The state of Hawaii would be skating on thin ice if they were to fall into this trap. Shame on you for falling into the trap, even if you only provided a forum for their cause.

Donald F. Wescott
Salt Lake City

THE EDITOR REPLIES: The U.S. has no federal law criminalizing sodomy. Thirty states, including Hawaii, have repealed (by legislation) or struck down (in court) anti-sodomy laws. Fifteen states still have laws on the books

which prohibit sodomy in same-sex relationships only. Five states, including Utah, prohibit sodomy across the board.

The Event welcomes letters to the editor. Mail to 1800 S. West Temple, Suite 205, SLC, 84115; E-mail to theevent@aol.com; or fax us at 487-4636. We reserve the right to edit letters for content and clarity.

—Heather May

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COVER STORIES

SHOWDOWN IN SUGAR HOUSE

HOW THE PARK WAS POLITICIZED ► page 8

Sugar House Park has been in the middle of political crossfires since before its birth when J. Bracken Lee and hard-core conservative cronies opposed its creation. Today, Mayor Deedee Corradini and liberal colleagues push for developmental intrusion in the park that would co-opt its founding principles.

by Kirk J. Tanner

SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES ► page 4

The ink wasn't yet dry on the Utah Indoor Clean Air Act when Sugar House's Java Jive Coffee House closed its doors to the general public, slapped a sign on the window and became a private social club for smokers. But landlord Craig Mecham, some neighboring businesses and the Department of Health are putting the establishment in a squeeze that could shut it down. Should we care that the kids who inhabit the coffee house may soon be on the street?

by Terri Holland

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Zoo Story
by Bradford Boyle



ON THE COVER:

Rising from the primordial ooze of Sugar House Park Lake, Mayor Deedee Corradini and Ted Wilson loom over members of Friends of Sugar House Park, who are fighting city hall takeover. Photo by Michael Schoenfeld. Wilson and Corradini photos by Kent Miles.

Zoo Story

I HATE TO HARP ON LAMAR and the gang when they're down, but all the press surrounding animal deaths at Hogle Zoo strikes a nerve.

As I read about the Fed's investigation into the dead giraffes, antelope, et al, my mind wandered to another senseless animal death at the zoo. One which was directly attributable to an animal handler's incompetence and went unreported to the media. Sure, it was in 1973 when I was 13, and it was a lizard, but I can't help but wonder if there aren't current similarities in my untold story.

When I was a child my father was stationed at Dugway Proving Grounds. You know, where they killed the sheep with nerve gas and all the new "biological-testing-run-wild" movies are based. Dugway is not *in* the desert, it *is* the desert—sun, sagebrush and sand. Deserts being deserts, boys being boys, and moms being moms, lizards were common pets. There's a wide variety of species to choose from and more importantly, Moms could cope with them. They weren't poisonous and they didn't carry rabies. As opposed to snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, or kangaroo rats, lizards were a compromise Moms could live with.

LIZARD ON A LEASH

LIZARDS ALSO HELD MORE STATUS than dogs as pets. A lizard had to be stalked and captured. Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom* was a popular show in 1973 and all boys wanted to be Marlin or Jim. A boy

walking a large lizard with a string collar, like a miniature hairless Chihuahua, held sway over another with a German shepherd.

A specialized weapon evolved to hunt lizards: a 1" by 4" board, two feet in length, with a clothespin mounted on one end and a nail on the other. A thick elastic band was stretched between the clothespin and the nail. With practice, the weapon was surprisingly accurate stunning prey long enough to pick them up.

Unfortunately, my father was transferred to Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City before I could bag my first lizard. City life replaced the open range. Hogle Zoo became a desert surrogate. I missed the desert, but the zoo captivated me. My plan at the time was to become Marlin Perkins' protégé or even better, Jim's, the man who actually wrestled the alligators, hippos or anacondas into the nets. I made a friend, Tom, who shared similar activities. We lived at the zoo in the summer, even climbing the fence when our allowance ran out.

My dad occasionally went to Dugway and offered to take Tom along on the trip. In preparation, I constructed the specialized weapon necessary to hunt large reptilian prey. Most people believe

large lizards are too fast to capture. Like Marlin and Jim, I knew that lizards, like all reptiles, are cold-blooded. Their body temperature is in the hands of nature. At noon, they are wide awake and fast, but in the early morning they can barely crawl to the nearest rock.

RAISING REPTILICUS

ARISING EARLY, WE DECIDED TO hunt on the sand dunes west of Dugway. Soon my trained eyes spied a gigantic specimen of *Gambelia wislizeni* (a leopard lizard) warming itself on a rock. My aim was true and the monster was struck broadside. I picked him (or her, there's no way to tell) up with both hands. I was amazed. It was the largest lizard in the world aside, of course, from the Komodo dragons that had been on *Wild Kingdom* a few weeks earlier.

Tom and I were proud owners of a lizard that would have made us kings of Dugway, if we had lived there. We named our pet Reptilicus, after a movie shown every other Friday on Channel Four's *Nightmare Theater*. Reptilicus was kept in a terrarium in my backyard and Tom and I spent the summer feeding it cabbage butterflies (those common white ones) and going to the zoo.

The plentiful supply of cabbage butterflies caused Reptilicus to grow immensely, to the point he could have been cast in the sequel

of his namesake. That fact, and our Hogle Zoo visits, ignited a thought: donating our pet, the largest leopard lizard ever to grace the planet, to the zoo to be shared and savored by all mankind. We would lose our pet, yes, but it was for the greater good and besides, we would be recognized as up and coming zoologists, perhaps called upon initially to gather local species, but as we grew older, sent to Africa to wrestle crocodiles into Marlin's net so the general public could marvel at them.

At the gate, we held up our heavy shoebox, holes punches in the lid to supply air. The female ticket taker, only slightly older than us, declined to examine Reptilicus. Tom and I marched to the reptile collection, housed in the building with the domed aviary. It was, and is, the place where the zoological outcasts are imprisoned—the giant scorpions and millipedes, the poisonous frogs, the skunks, the coatmundi. We did not want to part with our pet, but believed we must to begin our careers. We knocked on the zookeeper's door, and a man in a tan zoo uniform answered. I still remember his name: Mr. Coffeen. We opened our shoebox and Coffeen expressed admiration for Reptilicus. He pointed out the cage that would be our pet's new home although we expressed concern because of the snakes occupying it. "Those snakes do not eat lizards," Coffeen assured us.

DONORS' HEAVEN

COFFEEN DISAPPEARED WITH REPTILICUS into a back room. Soon the top to his new home was lifted and a giant hand placed him inside, near the front glass. Tom and I were happy as can be. There had been no mention of employment,

but still, we had made a contribution by donating an animal worthy of Hogle Zoo's collection. We were in heaven as we wandered the zoo.

Hell followed. Later, Tom and I decided to check on our pet and found a small crowd had gathered. We were surprised, but not amazed, that Reptilicus drew such interest. We pushed our way to the front. Instead of finding our pet and friend who had consumed 16 cabbage butterflies in an afternoon, we found a snake whose swollen mouth held two legs and a long, spotted tail. Then with an upward jerk, the snake swallowed, leaving only a flailing tail. The only remaining evidence of our pet was a bloated snake.

There are not words to describe our feelings that day. Our pet, which we had donated to mankind, had been eaten because we had trusted a man we wished to become.

Lamar Farnsworth apologized after Tom's dad complained. I still have the letter. We received free zoo passes which went unused. But, our childhood dreams were shattered. Neither Tom or I ever wrestled crocodiles or anacondas. It's a minor saga from long ago, but I can't help but wonder if Coffeen's spirit lives on as I read the daily coverage about Hogle Zoo. ☹

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