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Obituary

Warren J. Iliff

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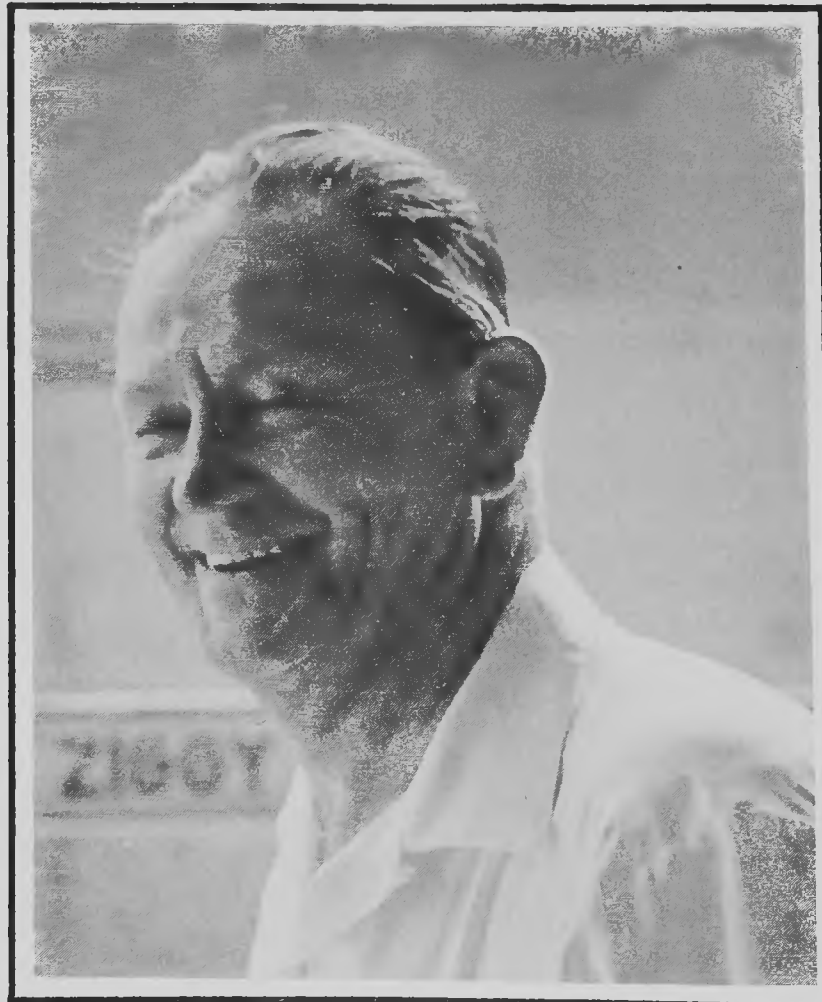
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OBITUARY
ELEPHANT TRAMP DIES
by Warren J. Iliff, Director
Washington Park Zoo

George W. "Slim" Lewis died on his 70th birthday, June 10, 1981, at Redding, California, where he and his wife Lillian have made their home these past years. Slim is survived by his wife and four sons.

Slim's passing, like that of Morgan Berry's, marks the end of another era. Elephant men seem to create and live their own era. Each seems to be a giant like the animals they loved, and each so different that one senses they lived in isolation from each other. But one thing they all shared was their animals...they all loved elephants, lived with them and died with thoughts of them in their heads.

Slim was an unusual and giving person. He shared his love of elephants with his readers through his books Elephant Tramp and I Loved Rogues. (See Reference No.'s 1691 in this issue and 451 in Elephant No. 3. See also Slim's letter in Elephant, 1(4):186-187, and Dunstan's response letter under Recent Correspondence in this issue.) He also loved to talk about them and effectively did so whether it was before the Lincoln Park Zoological Society in Chicago or the American Association of Zoo Keepers' national conference in Portland. Before he died he gave the Washington Park Zoo's Elephant Museum an oil painting of himself astride his famous and beloved Tusko.



George W. "Slim" Lewis, 1911-1981, photograph taken in July 1970 next to Ziggy's quarters at the Brookfield Zoo, Brookfield, Illinois.



"...Slim pinned between Ziggy's tusks from where he miraculously escaped." (Chicago Daily Tribune, April 27, 1941)

Perhaps Slim's greatest distinction was his association with so many famous and dangerous male elephants. When Slim joined the Al G. Barnes Circus, both the famous Tusko and the equally dangerous Black Diamond were among the elephants that traveled with this show. Slim was on the scene in Corsicana, Texas, that fateful day when Black Diamond grabbed a woman bystander and ran a tusk through her. He was also on hand three days after the circus left Corsicana and word came down to destroy Black Diamond. His story of those last moments is both horrifying and tender.

Tusko was Slim's great love. He was the reason Slim had gone with the Barnes show only to realize that he would never get to be Tusko's bull hand. Years later Slim learned that Barnes had sold Tusko to a West Coast Walkathon promoter who had gone broke and that Tusko was stranded in Salem, Oregon. Slim went to the rescue; from there they went to Portland with the idea of charging a dime to look at Tusko. For awhile things went well but on Christmas Eve Tusko began to take the building apart that he was housed in. Shortly after this excitement and more dimes for the "kitty", Slim and Tusko headed north to Seattle where after more showings in a tent and threats to do away with Tusko, the elephant ended up at the Woodland Park Zoo with Slim as his keeper. Here he was a great attraction and eventually died with Slim at his side (on Slim's twenty-second birthday).

The other great bull elephant in Slim's life was Ziggy at the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago. Perhaps the most famous zoo photograph ever taken showed Slim pinned between Ziggy's tusks from where he miraculously escaped. For the next thirty years Ziggy was to be confined indoors, but when a workable outside yard was finally built, Slim was on hand to urge his old friend out into his new enclosure.

Slim left behind him a great legacy and a great love of elephants. We and they shall miss him very much.

The editors wish to thank Lillian Lewis and George B. Rabb of the Brookfield Zoo for providing us with necessary information.

OBITUARY
Zdenek Burian
1904-1981

We have been notified by EIG member Joseph G. Engelhard that Zdenek Burian, an outstanding biological artist, died in Prague on July 1, 1981. (Source: Society of Vertebrate Paleontology News Bulletin Number 123, page 52.) Two publications containing illustrations by Burian which may interest our readers are:

- Augusta, Josef. 1962. A book of mammoths. Paul Hamlin Ltd., London, 52 pp. + 20 pls.
- Spinar, Zdenek V. 1972. Life before man. Crescent Books, New York, 228 pp. + 162 pls.