

April 4, 1956

Mr. W. D. Burden
Marine Studios
Marineland, Florida

Dear Mr. Burden:

It was a pleasure to receive your letter of March 22 and I trust I will have the opportunity to meet you personally in the not too distant future. Please accept my apology for being a little slow in replying to your letter. I have been out of town attending the Southwestern Psychological Association meetings.

The Vermont location sounds as if it might have some interesting possibilities. It would be technically feasible, of course, to use any of the aquatic mammals you mention to achieve some sort of crowd stopping exhibit. The facility with which these animals learn makes it possible with scientific methods to train them in a number of interesting and attractive behaviors in a short time. There are, however, a rather large number of practical considerations in addition to the very real ones which you mention in your letter.

- 1) In order to be much of a car stopper the animal would have to be in view for a good percentage of the time. This would be difficult to arrange with sliding or diving behavior. However, it would be perfectly possible to use other behaviors in which the visibility problem would not be so acute.
- 2) As you have already mentioned in your letter the cost of keeping the animals through the winter would be fairly high. One possibility would be to use them elsewhere during the winter season to help defray the expense. Or the exhibits themselves could be operated on a profitable or at least self-liquidating basis during the summer so as to help pay winter costs.

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- 3) While the harbor seal is a definite possibility, his small size might be a handicap just as in the case of the otter. Incidentally, the Fort Worth Zoo has been successfully keeping harbor seals in fresh water.
- 4) In order to operate such an exhibit automatically, it would be necessary to do some developmental work on an automatic feeder for dispensing feed suitable for aquatic mammals. One approach would be to develop a type of exhibit involving audience participation in which the viewers would load the feeding device. This would greatly simplify the mechanical arrangements and by selling the food the project could become self-liquidating or even profitable, and thus help defray winter costs. I am assuming that the budget for a project of this sort, even during the summer, would not be a large one and hence a self-liquidating system might be indicated where the tourist would contribute to defraying the cost.
- 5) In addition to devising an automatic feeder there would be a number of other developmental problems in working out an exhibit of this type with aquatic mammals. Such developmental work is quite time-consuming and our organization is fairly heavily committed at the present time on a number of projects.

In view of these problems some other possibilities have occurred to me. We might, for example, use other types of animals -- an animal such as a goat, walking a breath-taking obstacle path across the face of the cliff, might prove a good crowd stopper. Or we might use ducks or geese executing aquatic maneuvers in the tank, perhaps in combination with a larger animal visible on the cliff as a car stopper.

It has also occurred to me since the time is very short until the opening of this year's tourist season in Vermont, we might use material already developed for the coming season, with the idea of working out something special for the following year. Along these lines, we have thought that an automatic trained animal display in front of the gift shop, such as our Drumming Duck or the High Striker Goat, would cause a great deal of interest and by accumulating a crowd near the entrance would help in stopping cars. Of course, these acts do not fit the motif as well as the seals or other aquatic animals.

Reviewing the possibilities and problems discussed above, some questions occur to me which we should discuss in more detail:

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- 1) Would you like to try to shoot for an opening of an animal exhibit this summer?
- 2) If so, would you be interested in using material which we have already developed? There are other displays and exhibits besides the ones which I have mentioned and if this sort of exhibit seems promising to you, we can discuss them at greater length.
- 3) What sort of budget do you have in mind for the project and would you be interested in an exhibit which would be at least partially self-liquidating?

I would be very interested in discussing these suggestions in more detail and certainly hope that we can work out something that will be helpful and appealing. Of course the exhibit would have other potential besides simply constituting a car stopper. It would also enjoy word of mouth advertising among the local population and would be a good publicity getter since newspaper, magazine, and TV publicity is easily obtained by anything new in the animal business.

I am looking forward to hearing from you again.

Very truly yours,

Keller Breland

KB/ob



MARINE STUDIOS
MARINELAND
Florida

March 22, 1956

Mr. Keller Breland
Hot Springs, Arkansas

Dear Mr. Breland:

I am sorry I have not had the pleasure of meeting you yet. Your proposal for an important trained animal attraction is most interesting. However, so vital is the matter of location Bill Rolleston and I both feel that in view of the new turnpike which is slated to go down the center of Florida, it would be wise to postpone decision until that job is at least nearing completion. In the meantime it will, of course, be necessary to work up detailed cost and income estimates in order to determine the attractiveness of the project. Here now is another matter and I wonder if you would care to make suggestions concerning it.

On the edge of the town of Brandon, Vermont on Route 7, the most heavily travelled in the state, I have a small gift shop on an old marble quarry location. There are three old quarry holes about 150 feet deep filled with water. The surface water area of the largest tank is about 50' x 80'.

Immediately behind these three tanks is a vertical cliff about 90 feet high. It would be a simple matter to add life to the setting by creating a small waterfall over this cliff.

To the left of the left hand tank is a marble terrace about 30' x 50' raised about 10' above the parking and gift shop area. This terrace has tables and bright parasols. A sloping glacier - smoothed expanse of marble stretches down from the terrace to the parking area. This expanse is partially covered with rock-garden flowers as is the area around the gift shop and the much larger slope to the left of the marble terrace.

The area between the tanks and the terrace on the one hand and the road on the other is too narrow to accommodate many cars. However, further to the left and several hundred feet from the tanks a large area can be cleared of trees.

For a long time I have had in mind the possibility of using sea lions or polar bear or otters in one of the tanks. However, sea lions are very expensive to feed. The presence of polar bears might not be acceptable to the residents of Brandon, whereas otters might be a little small to provide the necessary punch.

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From the road you cannot see the water, but any animal moving up to a diving position on the cliff could be seen from a car. That would presumably provide the "Stopper" which would make people turn in to park, thereby increasing the sales at the gift shop.

The question is what is the best bet? The Vermont tourist season is, of course, very short - from early June to October 20th, so it would be important to try to avoid the expense of carrying animals for 7 wholly unproductive months.

While the location has certain attributes of unusual interest, it also has its limitations. You cannot see it from a distance and the space between the highway and the tanks is too small to be ideal.

A rough plan of it would look like this.

Sincerely yours,

W Douglas Burden

W. D. Burden
President

WDB/mmn

How about the harbor seal? They are so attractive but I wonder if they do well in fresh water

