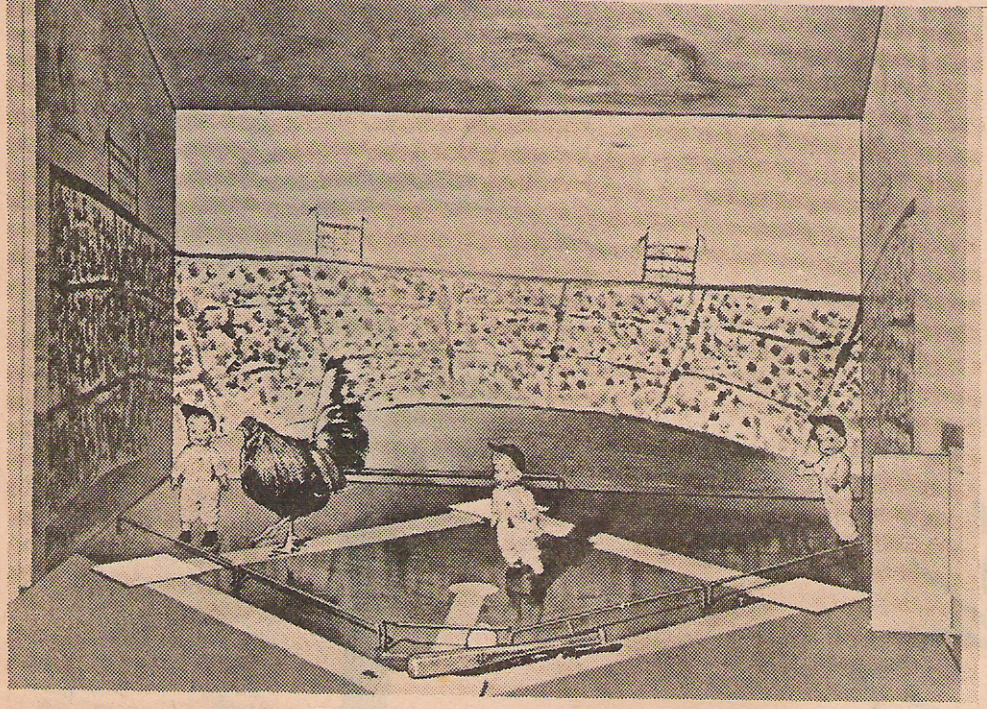

The slugger is a chicken

IQ Zoo: where the animals learn

When you think about a tight-rope walker, a fire chief and a piano player you don't see any connection — unless you've been to IQ Zoo.

If you have been to IQ Zoo at 380 Whittington, then you know that the tight-rope walker is a chicken, the fire chief is a rabbit and the piano player is a pig and that their connection is the fact that they were all trained at Animal Behavior Enterprises, Inc. of Rt. 6.

If you've been to IQ Zoo you also know about the Educated Hen, Bat Bird and Peter Rabbit's Photo Shop.

While at IQ Zoo you may find out that these same animals have appeared in television commercials and as guests on the Johnny Carson Show and with Ed Sullivan and Flip Wilson.

IQ Zoo begins its 17th year when it opens February 5 after an extensive interior remodeling. Last summer 50,000 people visited the attraction.

The animal acts will be automated this year for the first time, according to Gary Davis, manager.

A master timing unit that will control lights and sound and will also activate the animals' performances is being installed.

When complete the zoo's main showroom will offer a panorama that includes caged animals behind protective glass. There is a baseball game played by chickens, an act called the Dancing Bantams, a musical extravaganza which features a drumming duck and a piano playing duck. There is a kissing bunny, a chicken that plays basketball. There is also Bulls Eye Bunny and a fire fighting unit composed of a chicken and a rabbit.

A second showroom in the building which houses the performing animals will have a human in the act. He will introduce the talent and trigger their performances. He will introduce a rabbit, a duck, a chicken and a Macaw called Pogo.

The gift shop in the building is also being expanded to include more souvenirs of the zoo and of Hot Springs along with a variety of novelties ranging from shrunken heads to plastic balls.

Animal Behavior Enterprises, parent group of the zoo was started 25 years ago by a husband and wife team of graduate psychologists, Keller and Marian Breland. Breland died eight years ago. Mrs. Breland continues to supervise the operation that has trained some 15,000 animals.

The ABE farm on Rt. 6 currently has about 500 animals in training and about 20 employes, with Robert Bailey as general manager.

It can boast of being the world's largest producer of coin operated animal acts and of having animals that are now performing in Florida, Colorado and Tennessee.

It can also boast of having trained IQ Zoo's resident fortune teller, a chicken named Henda.

What's next for IQ Zoo?

Ask Henda.