

Zany Zoolympics

Zebras didn't exactly zip through Zooperstar contest

Silvers under the fingernails would have been less painful.

That's the way most of us aging journalists thought after participating in a crazy variety of feats in the Belle Isle Zoolympics to raise money for the new zoo.

If you agreed with the premise that a zoo just isn't a zoo without animals, you were a soft touch for a spot on one of the six Zooperstar teams and, presumably, you didn't mind paddling a canoe with brooms or pulling your teammates in a pony cart. And it was all uphill for that last feat — or so it seemed for this Zebra.

Assembling this menagerie was Bob Naylor and friends from the public relations firm of Willard/Thomas and Durocher. Naylor yanked 18 media people out of their comfortable environments and made teams out of natural competitors. Each team was made up of a representative of television, radio and newspapers — and each was assigned the name of an animal. Mine was christened the Zebras.

Then came a blit of info proclaiming such ridiculousness as "What do you do when you're less than a month away from the opening of a new zoo that is being called the best of its kind in the world, but you've hardly an animal to put in it, nor the money to buy any more?"

"In some cities, they'd go ape."

A STEADY stream of this cleverly-written promotional material arrived on my desk up to the week of the competition, but little did I know that it was cleverly disguising the fact that a fabulous set of events was lying in wait. It would have been kinder to enlist the aid of all the disappointed athletes who won't be in Moscow this summer.

Things started to go bad when the team list arrived and weather man Sonny Eliot wasn't on mine — virtually assuring rain and wind on the day when we'd be competing.

Fortunately, the island wasn't exactly crowded the day the Zebras crawled through the contest. Women who had brought their children to play on the new (and intriguing) Playscape for the most part ignored the so-called celebrities running over an obstacle course with a styrofoam picnic basket in hand. Except for the one who pressed her child close to her and asked this exhausted runner, "What's going on here?"

The Zebra team, composed of WJR's Warren Pierce and Channel 56's Ron Scott and myself, gave its best — and even some blood — to the competition.

For its furious efforts "brooming" a canoes in a zigzag pattern across the river, even up on the shore, our team took fifth place — best out for last place by Bob Talbert's Wet Birds — alias the Flamingos. At least we finished the course, even if we were gasping as we went under the final bridge. Talbert, Dick Puritan and Lorraine Vitale (who filled in for a late pigeon) didn't have a chance to experience the feeling of relief at seeing the red-ribbon finish line; they capsized their canoe and found out just how mucky the river bottom is. I



Kathy Moran

have a feeling the Sopped Birds' performance is the reason the EMS unit trailed our canoe and kept eagle eyes pinned on our shore-to-shore course.

Sill, Ron mistook his broom for a shovel and this passenger ended up at least as wet as anyone of the Soaked Birds. Carrying an extra 10 pounds of wet blue jeans is just what I needed for the next event, The Zoo-stion.

THIS BIT OF entertainment involved jogging around the new zoo boardwalk (15 miles if it was one), then racing across a football-size field (at least), and then on to a rigorous obstacle course (alias the Playscape) to a stunning, and exhausting finish. It was about as much fun as the flat tire I had on I-75 that morning on the way to Belle Isle.

We did this in relay-fashion and I barely held my own across the football field. Not only did my tennis squish, but I could hardly lift my feet about three-quarters through the run. That escapade twisted and tore our poor bodies — all except for Ron's — and earned us a spot behind the Camels and the Cheetahs.

By comparison, The Great Putt-On was a breeze. It didn't require much physical effort or racing against a clock. But an ignorance of golf helped. Golfing three holes with a putter was simple to anyone who didn't know how to use irons. It was harder for the golfers who tried drives. When all was said and done, we had racked up a total of 33 strokes (fifth place again), and were graciously spared the embarrassment of counting all the complete misses.

The golfing was frustratingly fun, but the worse was yet to come. In The Horse-Around, we — or I should say they — pulled our teammates about 100 miles in a pony cart, starting at the zoo and finishing at the Belle Isle Casino. It was hard to keep track of my falling in and out of the cart after my brief stint in the harness, but Ron and Warren's valiant efforts earned us a third place in that disaster.

Overall, we ended up fourth. And that's where you come in. Any and all Observer & Eccentric readers who would like to see animals next time they visit the zoo — and who have a little sympathy for the Zebras — are invited to send a contribution to the Detroit Zoological Society. The money will not only buy and feed animals, it will help boost our overall score. It's our only chance. Checks should be made out to the zoological society, with a note mentioning the valiant effort of the Zebras. Mail them to P.O. Box ZOO (what else), Detroit 48232.

And if you want to put yourself through the same ordeal we did, the Zoolympics course will be open to the public Saturday, May 31.



Two heads, or even three, aren't necessarily better than one as the Zebra team proved in the Zoolympics. But if all goes well, enough money will be raised to purchase a zebra or two for the zoo.

No, Ron, it's a broom, not a shovel. The Zebra team was comprised of (from left) Ron Scott of Channel 56, Kathy Moran of the Troy Eccentric and Warren Pierce of WJR. After a stunning second-to-last finish in the Lotta Regatta, the team went on to a fourth-place overall finish. But contributions made to the zoo in the Zebras' name could boost their overall score — as well as assure that the new Belle Isle Zoo will have animals. (Photos by Dwight Cendrowski)



INSIDE ANGLES

BY LOUISE OKRUTSKY

IN THE "I should have done it yesterday department." Yes, there will be a Founders' Festival this year from July 23-27. All groups and individuals who are interested in operating booths, concession stands or special events or participate in the Founders' Day parade should move right now to send in their requests for applications and information. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Farmington Chamber of Commerce, Post Box 15, Farmington 48024. For even faster action, mark the envelope "festival information." Locations for booths will be given on a first come first serve basis, according to Festival chairwoman Betti Huff.

AN ANGLES congratulatory paragraph is on its way to Aliza McCormick, a fifth grade student at Larkshire Elementary School, Farmington. She won first place for her grade level in the American History Essay contest sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her essay on blacksmithing in the colonies was judged best in her school by the Three Flags D.A.R.

It was also judged best in the state among essays submitted by fifth grade students. The contest is sponsored by the DAR in conjunction with promoting interest in American history among students. The competition is open to fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. Essays must be a specific length and there is a new theme selected each year. This year's theme is concerned with industries during the Revolutionary War.

BOYSVILLE of Michigan, a non-profit child-care agency in Macon, 20 miles southwest of Ann Arbor is conducting its first antiques and old fashion festival from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., June 14 and 15 on the central campus. About 100 antique and arts and crafts dealers will be on hand to exhibit and sell their merchandise. Live entertainment, games, amusements, a farmer's market and country store will be included in the event. Proceeds from the festival will go to the Boysville program. Boysville operates its main Macon campus and groups homes in Detroit, Ecorse, Saginaw and Alpena. For further information or for directions to the campus at 8744 Clinton-Macon Road, call Boysville's administrative office in Farmington Hills, 478-6717.

present its fourth Glendy Greek Festival on the grounds of the church, 25225 Middlebelt.

The festival, June 13-15, will be chaired by Nicholas Marcos Madias of Southfield. Madias is a founding member of the church and past president of the parish council.

HMMMMMMMM. HUMMMMM Listen. It's the Sweet Adelines of Macomb County warming up. And Farmington Hills resident Jerilee McHard sings with them. She was among the 51 voice choruses of the Macomb County chapter of Sweet Adelines Inc. when they won their fourth first place standing in the Sweet Adelines Region Two competition in Ontario. Mrs. McHard sings baritone with the barbershop harmonizers. Now, with one win under her belt, she and the other members of the crew will wing their way to Phoenix, Ariz. in the fall to compete against other regional winners from the U.S., Canada and other countries. IA sings their praises in four-part harmony, of course. (OK, the auxiliary geometric figures in Angles can't do this one solo.) If you knew Jerilee, like I know Jerilee, oh, oh what a girl (You realize we're singing this to the tune of "If You Knew Susie.")

EVER HAVE A terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day?

Well, the story of Alexander and the terrible, horrible no good, very bad day, written by Judith Viorst, turned into a first place winner for Gina Pagusa, a seventh grade student at O.E. Duncel Junior High School. Ms. Pagusa tied for first in the state forensics tournament in Ann Arbor, recently. She accumulated 298 points out of a possible 300 by telling the story three times for three different age groups. The story was memorized by her (look, ma, no book.) Her speech teacher is Ruth Levine. The event is sponsored by the Michigan Interscholastic Forensics Association for Middle Schools. Six students from Duncel participated in the competition and snagged a certificate of excellence by tallying at least 270 points. They are Mary Bundorf, Revecca Waters, Mary Bahna Mike Laguardia, and Caroline Kelly.

For these five, IA gives the following salute: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ (one star each).

And for Ms. Ragusa who won a trophy with a superior rating, the first time she entered the contest, IA supplies this salute: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆.

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HUDSON'S



ON THE SAME WEEKEND. Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church of Farmington Hills will