

During Marlee Breese's first year as curator of mammals at Sea Life Park, many animal abuse/negligence incidents were seen by the staff. In November 1990, they were reported to upper management. No actions were taken, causing several people to resign. The incidents are as follows:

1) Amiko, a large dolphin would not swim from one tank into another. Marlee drained the water down to a foot and beat him with a pole, inflicting wounds.

2) At one point, Sea Life Park bought a skiff of sardines, to see if it would be possible to replace the usual smelt and herring rations with it. Many animals did not like the sardines. One sea lion refused to eat them at all. Marlee told her staff to not try and feed him anything but sardines, that "he'll eat it when he's hungry." Only after a week had passed and his ribs were showing did she allow him to be fed smelt.

3) A few weeks later, that same sea lion was scheduled to be shipped to a foreign oceanarium. A senior trainer repeatedly asked Marlee who was going to escort the animal as required by Federal regulations. She said there would be no escort. The animal died before reaching the West Coast.

4) Makani, a two year old sea lion, was being trained at Hawaii Ocean Theater. She refused to get out of a dolphin tank and walk down the stairs to her holding pen. Marlee drained the tank, wrapped her in a net, and roughly dragged her down a flight of metal stairs. She then kicked Makani until she was able to

sent to Nancy Foster  
NMM FS

free herself from the net and run into her tank.

5) An 8 week old baby sea lion's mother was not nursing it, so it had to be bottle-fed. The baby would not suck on the bottle initially so Marlee pinned it's and tried to force the bottle into it's mouth. When the sea lion attempted to bite in self-defense, Marlee slapped the pup across the face. This occurred three more times.

6) Once Marlee and her staff were drawing blood from a sea lion. Another imprinted 3 year old sea lion was unobtrusively watching. Marlee approached this second animal to try and pet her. When the sea lion barked threateningly, she punched it in the face.

7) When NMFS delivers baby Monk seals to SLP, it is necessary to force feed them. This requires using a sterile tube to gently push a fish down their throats. Occasionally they cough the fish up. When this happens to Marlee, she pushes the tube and fish back down their throats quickly and in a manner dangerous to the animal.

8) One thing which bothered the staff in November 1990 and still continues today is Marlee's advocacy of food deprivation as a training technique. Animals who don't want to perform have their rations drastically reduced. This goes against the methods used by most oceanariums today, and the 20 years before Marlee's tenure proved it unnecessary. Since a loss of appetite is often the first sign of illness, this also hampers a trainer's ability to diagnose a sick animal. Once, Mikioi, an Atlantic Bottlenose dolphin, went for an entire week receiving about 15% of his ration. His ration was increased only after he developed

mysterious bumps on his tongue. In the beginning of October, 1993, Mikioi got only 2 pounds of his daily 16 pound ration because he did not want to move into a separate tank from a dolphin who had just moved into the show area.

Since November 1990, other disturbing things have happened.

1) In the summer of 1992 a baby hybrid "wholphin" was born, and did not nurse. The training staff, 24 hours after birth, went in and tube fed the baby. The staff continued this procedure every 6 hours, for the months. During this time period, a baby penguin was born. It too, did not appear to be getting fed by its parents. When one of the staff members suggested that they hydrate and tube feed the chick, Marlee said that the staff was too busy force-feeding the baby hybrid. The penguin chick died within a matter of days.

2) In the summer of 1993, Lawue, an Atlantic Bottlenose dolphin, gave birth to her second calf. Her first one did not nurse successfully and died after a week. The second calf did not appear to be getting any milk either, and steadily lost weight. The staff was fully expecting to duplicate the tube-feeding procedure that they had done the previous summer with the hybrid, Pohaikealoha. Marlee admitted that the calf was losing weight, but told her staff she did not want the hassle of raising another "Pohai". After 10 days, the baby was moved into a tank away from its mother with another lactating female. The baby died 6 hours later. The necropsy showed an empty stomach along

with other organ problems.

3) During the summer of '93, within a two week period, five animals died. Copies of the necropsy reports must be sent to NMFS. Marlee's secretary typed a cover letter for all the reports that listed the animal's name, species, and date of death. Marlee had previously told her to type a one line letter saying here are the required necropsy reports. When she reviewed the letter that actually got typed, she flew into a rage, ripping it up in the secretary's face while yelling at her to "not send up red flags to the Fed's about how many animals had died in so short a period." The secretary typed the short letter Marlee wanted. She was fired two weeks later. We believe it is possible that Marlee did not send the reports in together, but staggered their mailing.

4) The normal procedure in training area on the tank cleaning days. A junior trainer left 3 baby sea lions without water. He was in a hurry that day as he was overscheduled for shows. Marlee was preparing a presentation for an upcoming convention and did not leave her office for rounds. No one checked the animals for a few hours. One pup died and the others were quite ill for a period of time, but survived.

5) In October of this year, Jaws, a Penguin was found stuck in a uncovered drain at Hawaii Ocean Theater. He had suffocated. Jaws and the other Penguins had just been moved back to this show area following a major renovation. The park claims that the drain never had a cover on it. If so, that is the only

uncovered drain in the park. More disturbing is the fact that Jaws had been sucked down a drain earlier in another exhibit. This drain's cover had been removed in order to clean it. Luckily, the training staff was able to rescue him the first time. The second time never should have happened.