

**OPEN LETTER TO THE
LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL AND THE PUBLIC
JANUARY 2009**



We know Billy and we know elephants.

From 71 years experience with elephants including Billy we know that **Billy's best chance at a happy, natural life is a completed Pachyderm Forest at the Los Angeles Zoo.** Here he can father calves with a herd of cows and make his own family.

We know Billy. His favorite food is banana plants. We feed him bales of hay, bushels of produce and tree trimmings daily. We hide bananas and oranges in his yard for exercise and enrichment. We walk him miles, scrub his tusks, trim his nails and talk to him. Billy loves the water. He'd be splashing in his waterfall right now if Pachyderm Forest had been finished on schedule. It's Billy who pays for our delays.

Sending Billy to a sanctuary to live with his former zoo-mate, Ruby, sounds ideal **unless you know Billy. Research shows elephants form lasting relationships with elephants and people. When Ruby and Billy lived together, she bit part of his ear off.** That's not a relationship to foster. While sanctuaries have a role to play, they're no paradise for young bulls, who must be kept separate from the herd, castrated, or both.

Our lives might be easier without Billy. Elephant Keeper is one of the world's most dangerous jobs. We shovel hundreds of pounds of dung per day. And our jobs are not at stake. There are lots of animals at the Zoo. **We'd send Billy away right now if we believed it was best for Billy. It's not.**

We know elephants. For the 30,000 Asian elephants left on Earth, "the wild" is a vanished Eden. Outside of zoos young bulls live brutal, solitary lives battling to lead a breeding herd. In Asia they live in working camps or refuges under constant danger of poaching for ivory and the human hunger for land. Approximately 12,000 Asian elephants a year die in the wild. At that rate they could soon be gone. State-of-the-art zoos can save this species like we did the California condor.

We know the LA Zoo. We've become a world leader in conservation, education and animal care. Many of us have advanced degrees, and we've traveled the world to see native habitats, wildlife refuges, and other zoos. We deserve the trust and support of City officials.

Hundreds of thousands of LA children marvel at Billy each year. He is the only elephant many of them will ever see. We know that many walk away from our zoo with a new love for nature and desire to protect the natural world. They are the hope for Billy and other Asian elephants.

We call on the City Council to finish Pachyderm Forest now for Billy, LA's children, the world and future generations.

Sincerely,

The Elephant Keepers and colleagues at the LA Zoo

Karen & Pely
 Don Ebel
 Kelley Trume
 Suk
 Dean Lopez
 Jumbo Gumona
 Angela Anderson
 Tania Prosser
 Shirley Richardson
 Nancy Thomas
 Cynthia Reynosa
 Jessica Moran
 Mike Bona
 Jennifer Gonsow
 Ernest Bunn
 John Sil
 Jill Wener
 Von L Jasso
 Kim Ratter
 Dade Jackson
 Tom Solilo
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