The Asian and African 

barns at ARK 2000.

sites on the property. Through the sanctu-
ary’s initial construction, experts were 
brought in and several sites were identi-
fied and fenced off to avoid animals 
trouncing on sacred land. John James, a 
Mi-Wuk spiritual leader, blessed the prop-
erty at the dedication, expressing the gratitude 
for PAWS’ willingness to preserve the 
sanctity of the sites. He said he would 
rather see the property used for an animal sanctuary “than a bunch of homes.”

Today, a memorial garden has been 
established at one of the largest sites, 
where trees are planted to remember 
animals that have passed while in 
PAWS’ care.

Once African elephants Mara and 71 
were moved to ARK 2000, a steady influx 
of extra-large retirees came calling. 71, 
the poster child for PAWS – died Sept. 21, 
2008, of pancreatitis. Stewart said colic is 
fairly common in captive elephants because their diets aren’t quite as com-
plete as they would be in the wild. PAWS 
staff and veterinarians had kept vigil with 
71, but she eventually weakened and died.

“It was like we lost our boss,” Stewart
lamented at the time.

Today Annie, Rebecca, Wanda and 
Gypsy – all Asian females – share a barn 
and about 35 acres of hillside at ARK 
2000. Across a gravel lot is the African 
barn, where Lulu, Mara, Maggie and 
Ruby are kept and roam 100 acres of 
fenced territory. The fencing is built of old 
oil well piping Stewart located in Texas. 
Each post is concreted into the ground 
several feet deep and extends to almost 10 
feet above ground.

Maggie is one of the more famous resi-
dents at ARK 2000. She arrived via U.S. 
Worldwide media converged on San 
Andreas as a specially constructed cargo 
carrier outfitted with the last chains the 
elephant will ever wear was used to fly 
Maggie from Anchorage, Alaska, where 
she was living at the Alaska Zoo. Keepers 
and the public there sought greener pastures for Maggie and it wasn’t 
until former host of “The Price is Right,” 
Bob Barker, stepped in that the move 
became possible. Barker made a contribu-
tion to PAWS and has since become 
one of the group’s largest supporters.

“I agreed to make a $750,000 contri-
bution to PAWS’ sanctuary in California 
for the specific purpose of making life 
as good as possible for Maggie,” Barker 
was quoted.

Maggie was born in Zimbabwe, Africa, 
and brought to Alaska in 1983, accord-
ing to pawsweb.org. Her mother was 
killed in a government-sponsored cull – 
hunts that are carried out to control ele-
phant populations that are encroaching 
on human settlements.

Maggie had a companion in Anchorage 
named Annabelle, an Asian elephant, until 
1997, when Annabelle died.

“This was the thing to do,” said 
Patrick Lampi, executive director of the 
Alaska Zoo, as he sat under an oak tree 
outside the African elephant compound 
in 2007, watching Maggie explore the 
California foothills.

“This is so impressive,” Barker said 
when asked what he first thought when 
he arrived at ARK 2000. “I knew it was 
marvelous from photographs, but this is 
truly spectacular.”

Up the hill from the Asian barn – which 
has a half dirt and half concrete floor so 
the elephants can sleep comfortably on 
special loam brought in for that purpose – 
are the bull barns. In 2008, PAWS 
received Nicholas, an Asian bull elephant, 
and frantically tried to raise money to con-
struct a separate barn for him because 
bulls and females cannot be housed 
together. The matriarchs in elephant soci-
ety send teenage males away from their 
herds in the wild as the boys enter their 
first moust – initially akin to human 
puberty but a hormonal force of nature 
that knows few bounds in wild elephants. 
Support arrived when Barker heard 
Nicholas’ plight and another sizeable 
contribution came in. Nick’s barn is 
dedicated to Barker, where fences 
over 10 feet tall assist Brian Busta – 
Stewart’s nephew, who is Nick’s pri-
mary caregiver – with managing the 
sanctuary’s largest resident. PAWS is 
now in negotiations to possibly pro-
vide retirement for three other bulls, 
but Derby said that’s on a first-come, 
first-served basis because they only

have room for one more.

PAWS uses protected contact as its 
method of training its elephants. Targets 
– bamboo sticks with balls on the ends – 
are used to indicate where keepers want 
the elephants to stand. They also help 
humans tell the elephants what parts of 
their bodies to push through special gaps 
in the fences so they can be cared for. 
Captive elephants require a lot of foot 
care, primarily because they aren’t 
traipsing through rough outdoor settings 
and grinding their toenails naturally. 
While PAWS’ pachyderms do have free 
reign over some outside spaces, it’s not 
enough to adequately trim their tootsies, 
so the people perform jumbo pedicures 
about once a week.

The protected contact is safer for the 
humans and the animals, as handlers are 
not close enough to the elephants to 
allow their trunks to grab them. This is 
in sharp contrast to the training methods 
used by circuses. Stewart said, which 
rely on bullhooks.

“That’s a weapon,” Stewart said, noting 
that when he has gone to speak with 
members of the California Legislature, 
an armed guard has accompanied him 
from the entrance of the capitol to the 
meeting room. At circuses, he said, the 
hooks are used to smack elephants or to 
hook into their mouths and are then twist-
ed to grip their lips.

Here kitty, kitty

In April 2003, Department of Fish and 
Game officials served a search warrant 
at a purported animal rescue facility in 
Colton and were shocked to find 90 
dead tigers in freezers, 13 living infant 
and juvenile tiger and leopard cubs and 
54 living adult tigers, leopards and 
lions. In what became one of the largest 
animal rescue efforts on the planet, 39 
of the tigers ultimately came to San 
Andreas. Today, 29 are enjoying seven 
sections of grassy hillside and living 
their days in the Gold Country sun, 
lounging like oversized housecats.

John Weinhart’s so-called rescue facili-
ty in Colton was disgusting, Stewart 
said. He made several trips there as the 
tigers’ moves were coordinated. Wein-

Ed Stewart, Marla and 
Pat Derby

Brian Busta and Asian bull Nicholas.

Annie takes a dip in the giant Jacuzzi.

Annie, foreground, and 
Rebecca with the bull 
barns in the background.