



by Mitch Rily

When I was younger, and the world seemed much larger, I remember learning that more than 70 percent of the Earth's surface is covered by water. Since marine life could live up at the surface, down in the depths, or anywhere in between, this meant there was a lot more space (about 300 times the habitable space, I later found out) for animals and plants to grow and thrive under water than on land. This naturally meant that there was a lot out there I might never get to see if I never got to sea, so to speak.

Evidently, there were others that must have known that there would be more inquisitive explorers like me growing up. In 1964, two UCLA fraternity brothers, George Millay and Ken Norris – conceived the idea of this San Diego destination for the adventurous and the intrigued. Milton C. Shedd, an advisor to the fraternity, came in as a partner to help raise capital, and David DeMott, another frat brother, joined the team as secretary-treasurer. With the help of a few dozen employees, a handful of dolphins and sea lions, and a variety of fish, the venture began to capture the attention and the hearts of people the world over.

In just a few years, SeaWorld became a publicly traded company, and SeaWorld San Diego was joined by sister parks in Ohio, Florida, and Texas. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. owned and managed SeaWorld for 13 years before selling the parks to their current owners, Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc., in 1989. Today, SeaWorld San Diego is one of

ten parks operated by Busch Entertainment Corporation, subsidiary of Anheuser-Busch.

Through the years, the Southern California marine-life park has continued to expand and flourish. Animals, shows, and attractions have made SeaWorld not only the top tourist attraction for San Diego, but a rare cross-over between the world of amusement parks and that of zoos and aquariums. Every day at the park is a completely new experience for the guests as well as the trainers. Dolphins and sea lions show off their talents in specially-designed stadiums, penguins and puffins strut through their chilled habitats, and sharks come face to face with their visitors as they swim around and over the underwater viewing areas.

And then there is Shamu: the awe-inspiring killer whale that captured the hearts of

Thea Classic Award SeaWorld

shamu's world of mystery and beauty

SeaWorld trainers and guests. The original Shamu joined the SeaWorld family at the end of 1965, and in no time this killer whale became the icon of the SeaWorld organization. With shows and interactions, amazing Dine with Shamu experiences, and even cookies shaped like the well-known whale (known among the author's friends and family as Shamookies), Shamu has become synonymous with SeaWorld. Over the years, the name of Shamu has been given to all of the performing killer whales at the SeaWorld parks, both males and females, carrying on the "family" tradition of both entertaining and educating guests each day.

The ideals of education, entertainment, research and conservation were the founding principles behind SeaWorld San Diego, and those principles remain as strong as ever today. Millions of students and teachers have



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joined Shamu and friends for educational adventure resident and day camps at SeaWorld. The Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute, a nonprofit research foundation opened just prior to the park in 1963, has given scientists amazing opportunities to work and learn from aquatic life up close. Such research has led to unprecedented insights into the understanding and preservation of the oceans and its innumerable inhabitants. SeaWorld's rescue and rehabilitation programs for ill or injured animals, along with the preservation and conservation of wildlife and wild places through the SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund, exemplify SeaWorld's commitment to give back and to protect the amazing marine world.

Recently, I had the joy of taking my young daughter to SeaWorld San Diego for her first time, and through her eyes I experienced the beauty and wonder of the park all over again. The dolphins danced, the whales waved, and my daughter ate three Shamookies. The world has begun to seem a bit smaller as I've grown older, but the majesty of the world beneath the waves continues to enthrall me. As we left SeaWorld that day, I started to tell my little girl just how big the oceans are, and how there was more life underwater that people have never even seen yet. As she fell asleep in the car on the way home, holding her small stuffed dolphin, I knew I'd be bringing her back someday soon.

After four decades of delivering the beauty of the seas – and instilling a greater appreciation thereof – to the Southern California coast, SeaWorld is more than just a tourist attraction or an interactive marine-life park. SeaWorld San Diego continues to remind us all that we are responsible to continue to learn from and protect the world around us, and just like our finned friends, we are small fish sharing a very large pond.



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