**DISCOUNT TICKETS ON SALE**

All members of the campus community, including STUDENTS, FACULTY, and STAFF, may buy tickets at the discount prices listed below:

- **AMC THEATERS** - $2.50
  (May not be used on Friday or Saturday evenings)
- **ADVENTURE ISLAND** - $9.25
  (No expiration date)
- **ASOLO THEATRE** - 10% discount
  (Must make reservation and payment at the time of order; contact the Activities Office)
- **BUSCH GARDENS** - $13.80
  (No expiration date)
- **COUNTRY CLUB** - $13.80
  (Gift certificate)
- **SUNSET GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB** - $3.00
  (Green fees, must show valid USF ID when playing on the course)
- **GENERAL CINEMA** - $3.00
  (No expiration date)
- **DINNER, BRUNCH, LUNCHEON** - $1.00
  (Payout date)
- **UNIVERSITY THEATRES** - $9.25
  (No expiration date)
- **AMC THEATERS** - $2.75
  (Discount price listed below)
- **SUNSET GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB** - $3.00
  (Discount price listed below)

**NOTE:** Rates available for programs for Semester II, 1988.

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  - **SUNSET GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB** - $3.00
  - **GENERAL CINEMA** - $3.00
  - **DINNER, BRUNCH, LUNCHEON** - $1.00
  - **UNIVERSITY THEATRES** - $9.25
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  - **SUNSET GOLF AND COUNTRY CL
Award Nominations Solicated

The Honors and Awards Council is soliciting nominations for the following:

- Distinguished Scholar Award
- Distinguished Teacher Award
- The Alumni Professor Award
- Distinguished Service Award
- Honorary Degrees
- Emeritus Status

Any member of the University community may submit nominations by writing a letter of nomination supported by documentation. The materials should be submitted through the dean of the appropriate college with a copy of the letter forwarded to Dr. Carole J. Schwartz, Chair of the Honors and Awards Council, c/o the Childhood Education Department (EDU 303).

All nominations must be received on or before March 1, 1988.

Nominations for Honorary Degrees to be awarded at commencement in May, 1988 should be submitted on or before February 1, 1988.

Details and guidelines for each of the awards are available in the Office of the Deans, Office of the Provost, or from the Chair of the Honors and Awards Council.

Campus Bookstore News

by Dot Thrush

USF Bookstore

USF students are invited to participate in the Bookstore’s “Back-to-School Giveaway” contest in progress now. Entry blanks are available from Bookstore cashiers upon request. Grand prize is an AM CASSETTE TAPE PLAYER to be awarded in the drawing on Tuesday, Jan. 19 at noon in the Bookstore. The “Giveaway” is limited to USF students. One entry per student, please.

Herff Jones Ring Day is also scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 19. A representative will be in Bayboro Lobby from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM and from 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM.

The deadline for refunds for Semester II textbooks is Tuesday, Jan. 26. Cash register receipts MUST accompany each refund request. New textbooks must be free of all marks. Polywrapped materials which have been opened, recommended titles, workbooks and study guides are NON-REFUNDABLE.

Writer’s Conference Returns to Bayboro

by Joe Feuer

Staff Writer

The 16th Annual Suncoast Writers’ Conference will be held on campus Thursday-Saturday, January 28-30. The conference is an admirable event because it attempts to be all things to all writers and generally succeeds at doing so. The cordial and caring hosts will be Drs. Ed Hirschberg and Steve Rubin of USF’s English department. Among the outstanding guests are novelist/screenwriter Christopher Keane, Boston-based author of eight books and over a dozen screenplays; Ellen Datlow, fiction editor of Omni magazine and editor of Blood is Not Enough, a vampire anthology; James Hall, whose first novel, Under Cover of Daylight (murder in the Florida Keys), was a major success; and Anita Diamant, head of a New York City agency that represents over a hundred writers.

The conference features seminars and discussions of both formal and informal natures, and anyone interested in any aspect of writing will surely find something of appeal to them. For more information on the Writers’ Conference, pick up a brochure from the Student Activities Office.

Club Clarion

SERVICE WITH A CIRCLE

by Joe Feuer

Staff Writer

Most of us are nice people; some people actually get off their duffs and prove it with several hours of volunteer community service. Among them are the USF Bayboro chapter of Circle K International, led by President Patrick Mazza. The Crow’s Nest found Mazza to be more than willing to discuss his involvement in Circle K.

Next: How large is your club’s membership?

Mazza: We are usually between 12 and 25 people. I’m hoping to get at least 30 for next semester.

Next: Why are Circle K members eager to give their time?

Mazza: They’re just special people who believe they can enhance their leadership qualities by contributing to their school and their community.

Next: How many service hours per month should new members expect to put in?

Mazza: I generally put in 25 to 30 hours per month. However, I tell new members that there is no set amount of hours. Whatever time they can and want to give is acceptable to me. We don’t necessarily expect all members at all events, but when we plan, we do so with a majority turnout in mind.

Next: What is your relationship to the National Order of Kiwanis?

Mazza: It’s a tri-level system; at the high school level are the Key Clubs, collegiate level is Circle K, and then comes the Kiwanis. The local Kiwanis chapter helps to sponsor and advise us, but monies raised go in part to Circle K International. There is a “Key-to-College” program that encourages members to move from one level to another as they grow.

Next: What are some of the projects you are involved in?

Mazza: We’re very involved in Special Olympics programs. On Valentine’s Day we visit rest homes, give out candies and spread the holiday spirit. We had a very successful Easter festival on campus last year and we hope to repeat that this year. We’ve also started a newsletter, The Bull Sheet, for our local members. But it was the Special Olympics that got me personally involved with Circle K, and the giving there is the true meaning of our organization: to help people to enjoy life more.

Next: What are the club dues?

Mazza: It’s $20 per year, per member. Of that, $8 goes to our national level, $7 goes to the local, and $5 stays in the club treasury. In return, members receive the organization magazine, mailings, and other benefits.

Next: Do you interact much with Circle K clubs from other campuses?

Mazza: We’re in the Suncoast Division with five other colleges, and we try to interclub whenever possible. They have approximately the same size membership we do. We’re very close with the SPIC chapter.

Next: Do you have any problems with members who join just for their resumes and are reluctant to give service time?

Mazza: We’re a volunteer organization, so it’s hard for me to discipline members who fail to give time. We have had members who have joined for resume reasons; at least we get their dues, which go for a good cause. But most people end up enjoying their service time, and many give more hours than they originally planned to.

Next: What is the origin of your symbol and do you have any relation to Circle K convenience stores?

Mazza: The K is for Kiwanis, and the circle symbolizes unity. We had the name first; then the stores popped up and stole it. Our national organization began a court action, but it seemed it would be too costly. So we always try to add the “international” after our name; our official abbreviation is CKI. The stores have absolutely no affiliation with us.

see Clubs, page 4
Clubs from page 3

Nest:
Mazza: No; each level has its own.

Fa;ulty advisors
Sunshine Kiwanis and that gregarious world traveler, Prof. Fred Flintstone's
20th anniversary of helping a previous honors.
Can't wait to enjoy the Flintstones, and I have been thinking of using their
"ak-ak-a-dak" password system at our local club level. It seems to work well for
Fred Flintstone's Order of Water Buffalo.

Nest:
So you'd like to essentially become the Poohbah of Bayboro?
Mazza: The Grand Poobah, yes.

Faculty advisors to Circle K are Don Knowles from the Sunshine Kiwanis and that gregarious world traveler, Prof. Harry Schalemman. Prof. Schalemman just finished celebrating the 20th anniversary of helping a previous Circle K chapter to win National Chapter of the Year honors. Can Prof. Schalemman do it again?

For more information about Circle K, contact Pat Mazza at 546-6773 or leave a message at the Student Activities Office.

FLORIDA PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP (FPIRG)

Florida PIRG is students and professional staff taking action to protect Florida's coastlines, clean up toxic waste, limit bank check holds, and increase individual participation in the political process. Florida PIRG provides students with the skills and resources needed to work effectively on important consumer and environmental issues.

For further information, contact campus coordinator Rick Tritis at 893-9614.

***

STUDENT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (SEA)

SEA held a successful end-of-the-semester banquet at Spoto's Restaurant on December 6. At that time out going officers were recognized for their outstanding leadership and many contributions to campus life.

New officers were introduced:

President: Lynn Cadogan
Vice-President: Stephanie Weber
Secretary: Theresa Pickard
Treasurer: Bill Griswald

The new officers encourage interested students to investigate the excellent programs offered by SEA.

***

PHI THETA KAPPA ALUMNI CHAPTER (PTK-KAPPA)

Crys Smith, president of Kappa, announces that the groups food drive will continue through Semester II. She adds that PTK recently procured a banner in rich royal blue and gold, the national honor society's official colors, the first annual end-of-the-semester and Christmas party was a huge success.

For more information, contact Smith at 893-9545.

***

STUDENT ACCOUNTING ORGANIZATION (SAO)

The Student Accounting Organization is looking forward to another exciting semester. The first opportunity of the new year to join SAO will be Tuesday, January 19 at noon. A luncheon is planned in BAY-108 at that time and interested students are invited to attend.

Evening meetings have been scheduled to accommodate right students who may be unable to attend the luncheon. The new officers of SAO for the spring semester are:

President: Tim Scott
Vice-President: Paulette Bown
Treasurer: Cathy Kinney
Corresponding Secretary: Lorraine Bird
Recording Secretary: Valerie Pfachy

The officers of SAO would like to welcome all students back to campus...and they look forward to an informative and productive semester!

Clubs from page 4

President: Tim Scott
Vice-President: Paulette Bown
Treasurer: Cathy Kinney
Corresponding Secretary: Lorraine Bird
Recording Secretary: Valerie Pfachy

From the Student Government President
by Joseph Alvarez
SG President

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome new and returning students to our beautiful harborside campus. I hope your holiday break was restful and you're geared up for the new semester.

November SG election results are:

President: Joseph M. Alvarez
Vice-President: Joanne Howard
Treasurer: Brenda Williams
Representatives:
Business: Lorraine Bird
Karen Colton
Robert Williams
Education: Crys Smith
Natural Science: Andrew W. David

Please feel free to contact any of us if you have any questions or ideas concerning Bayboro Campus.

If you are interested in helping and for the students of this campus, USF St. Petersburg has a lot to offer its students. If there is anything that I can do to make your experience here more pleasurable, please let me know.

Alvarez Wins Strange Election
Commentary by Joe Feuer
Staff Writer

In campus Student Government (SG) elections held on November 18 and 19, Joe Alvarez soundly defeated A. Blank to retain the position of Bayboro SG President. Joanne Howard won the Vice-Presidency by a wide margin over M.T. Space. All other officers and representatives won over phantom opposition.

The elections were a formality, held because they had to be for validation purposes. Yet this reporter, who worked the election booth for a brief time, felt deep embarrassment at handling students a ballot which held no choice options whatsoever. (Even write-in candidates were disallowed, supposedly because of too many frivolous nominations in the past.) As expected, students examining the ballot first asked if it was a joke, and were pretty disgusted to find out that it wasn't. One doesn't expect to have one's intelligence insulted at college, of all places.

It all came out all right, I suppose; Student Government now has a solid group of intelligent and dedicated members committed to doing their best for their colleagues and their campus. Also, SG has decided to allow write-ins in future elections, in hopes of finding potential nominees who have not yet expressed interest in the jobs. But the bizarre and quite ineffectual election of November 1987 should be remembered, if only so an exact replica of it never again takes place at USF Bayboro.
Bayboro Student Development Center

by Sue Street, Ph.D.

Counseling Services

CAREER PLACEMENT SERVICES

Attention: May '88 and Summer '88 graduates!

It's time for you to sign up for placement services if you are planning to graduate in May or August 1988. You may register for placement services and interviews two semesters before graduation. The time is NOW!

To register, please come by BAY-112. There are two major requirements for placement registration:

1. Attend ORIENTATION to learn about the interview selection process;
2. Accurately complete required registration forms.

This service is free to USF students; most interviews are held on the Tampa campus although some are held here on the St. Pete campus.

The ORIENTATION sessions will be held in BAY-108 on Wednesdays from 4:00 to 5:00 PM. Please sign up in advance in BAY-112 (893-9129).

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

EDUCATION MAJORS: Check out EDUCATION EXPO coming up on Thursday, February 4. Representatives from five county school systems will be here to talk to interested students: Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Sarasota. Sign up will be with Mary Ann Harrell in BAY-201. Further information can be obtained at BAY-112. Spring graduates are especially encouraged to attend! Education Expo will be held in BAY-108 on February 4 from 2:00 - 5:00 PM.

BUSINESS MAJORS AND OTHER SPRING GRADS: CAREER EXPO is coming for you on Thursday, March 3. This event brings in numerous companies looking for top graduates in all business fields. This is your chance to talk to companies such as IBM. Expo will be held in the Bayboro Lobby from 9:30 AM - 3:00 PM. For more information, contact BAY-112.

ACCOUNTING MAJORS: Look for more accounting firms to come to the Bayboro Campus to interview accounting students. Contact the Career Resource Center (BAY-112) or call 893-9129.

OPEN UNIVERSITY

Reminders for students taking OPEN UNIVERSITY exams:

Please come by BAY-112 the WEEK BEFORE CLASSES BEGIN (January 4-8) to do three things:

1. Sign up for your course exam;
2. Pick up your course exam schedule;
3. Pick up your course syllabus.

MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

Two groups will be offered FREE to USF students this semester:

Women Who Love Too Much: Mondays, 5:00 - 6:00 PM. Tai Chi Meditation: Tuesdays, 5:00 - 6:00 PM. To sign up for these groups, come by BAY-112 or call 893-9129.

BIBLIOThERAPY AND CAREER RESOURCES

In need of information to learn more about phobic disorders? The Anxiety Disease (1983) has received much acclaim for being a definitive work on the subject. Its author, David Sheehan, M.D., is a member of the USF Medical School Psychiatry faculty and is considered a world-renowned expert on phobias.

If you got through last year without going completely crazy, you may decide you should become a psychologist. Is Psychology the Major for You? (1987), published by the American Psychological Association, will answer many of your questions about majoring in this field. A thorough and excellent resource.

The Tao of Tai Chi Chuan (1985) is an excellent resource for those who wish to learn more about Tai Chi Chuan and Taijiquan. Master Tsung Hwa Jau is a highly esteemed instructor in the internal martial arts and meditation. His instruction on breathing exercises and internal circulation of chi are exceptionally detailed and profound.

DEAN'S HONOR LIST

The following St. Petersburg Campus students met the criteria for the Dean's Honor List for the Summer '87 semester. To be eligible, students must carry a minimum of 12 credit hours (no S-U grades), be in the top ten percent of their Colleges, and earn a minimum grade point average of 3.5 for the semester.

AgiLAr, MARY KAY
ALEXANDER, C'VIL
BAKELAND, CRISTINE
BAKELAND, JOANNE
BARTHOLOM, KAREN
BAZICK, LAURIE
BEST, DEBORAH
BEVILACQUA, ANDREA
BUSCAGLIA, DEBORAH
DESERO, MARK
DEVOR, JOHNNIE
DOUGHTON, CONSTANCE
DOWD, MARYELLEN
FOX, ELLEN
FRANKLAND, JUDITH
FURR, AMY
GODFREY, PATRICK
GOLDEN, DEBRA
HENDERSON, DEBORAH
HERBOS, REBECCA
HESTER, MARGARET
HOBER, KAREN
KEMP, SANDRA
KEMP, SANDRA
MEYER, ELIZABETH
METTETAL, BONNIE
MINTZ, TERESA
PLEMONS, SHERRIS
PURDY, EDWARD
RODAVAVER, ELIZABETH
ROEMER, FRED
SHERMAN, ANN
SMITH, TINA
ST. CLAIR, MEREDITH
STODGELL, ELAINE
TEMPLE, CAROLYN
TERRIT, PATRICIA
TRUAX, PAMELA
WISTBROOK, VALERIE

Administration - USF at St. Petersburg

Dr. William Garrett
Dean of the St. Petersburg Campus

Mr. Samuel Fustaljian
Director of the Poynter Library

Dr. Stephen Ritch
Director of the Division of Student Affairs

Mr. Herman Brames
Director of Administration and Finance

Dr. Ralph McKay
Director of University Relations and Development

Sexual Assault Seminat

by Joe Feurer
Staff Writer

A sexual assault seminar was presented by Campus Police to a small but interested crowd in BAY-130. Bayboro's Corporal Pete Daly was the host, and Officer Lila Davis of the St. Petersburg Police was guest speaker.

Ms. Davis gave several graphic examples of the different circumstances under which rape may occur, and an interesting and touching film about one woman's reaction to sexual assault was shown. A question-and-answer period followed, and was highlighted by both officers' tips for keeping your dwelling and your body away from potential assault situations. Neither officer had any special set of instructions on what to do in the unfortunate situation of being an assault victim; both agreed that the victim's response would depend on the physical surroundings and the psychological nature of the attacker.

Much of the information dispensed is contained in a brochure about rape defense which will be available outside the Cashier's Office window while supplies last. Thanks to USF Police for presenting this awareness seminar!
CONGRATULATIONS

The following members of the University community were recently awarded doctoral degrees:

Prof. Janice Buchanan, Ph.D. (Music Education)
Prof. Charlene Long, Ph.D. (Education)
Marie Azzarello, Ph.D. (Marine Science)
Glenn Parsons, Ph.D. (Marine Science)
Mary Defran, Ph.D. (Marine Science)

The following St. Petersburg Campus Students were selected to receive scholarships:

Charles Haslam Scholarship
Marilyn Alfred (English/English Education)
St. Petersburg Woman's Club
Karen Minaca (Education)
Ronnie Lee Mettel (Education)
West St. Petersburg Rotary
Joanne Howard (Business)

Valerie Prosser, Activities Program Specialist, gave birth to a lovely daughter, Amanda Nicola, on December 1. On that day, Mrs. Prosser took a break from her job at the Activities Office, drove herself to Bayfront Medical, and had Amanda!

Zane Coker, chef and manager of Orange Blossom Catering's USF Fishing Service, was married December 30 to the former Susan Daryl Judd at Coquina Key.

St. Pete Campus student Patrick Mazza was selected as USF Ambassador-of-the-Month in October. BRAVO!

Fiction Contest / Inner

The Second Bayboro Fiction Contest for University of South Florida students was won by Daniel Catalano of the Sarasota campus for his short story, "The Heart is a Scratch-board."

Sponsored by the Society for the Advancement of Poynter Library, a group of people who are interested in libraries, books, and writers, the competition was open to all USF campuses.

Catalano won $250. Second Place winner, Adam Czyzewski, a Sociology senior on the Tampa campus, received a check for $100 for "Waiting for a Face" and Valerie Kennedy, also from the Tampa Campus, won $100 as third place prize for "Some Essential Part." She is an English major and plans a career in writing.

Dr. Richard Mathews served as final judge. He is an associate professor of English and co-coordinator of the Writing Area at the University of Tampa, and is a former director of The Kongoletti Foundation in St. Petersburg.

Happy Valentine's Day

by Pam Thomhill
Cashier's Office

This past Christmas I had the pleasure of sending Christmas cards to our servicemen and women overseas. At first I was a little apprehensive about writing to strangers, but after I got started, I found it to be great fun. I sent tinsel to the U.S. Army soldiers who patrol the Iron Curtain and mistletoe to our guys ans' gals in Iceland.

Please join me this Valentine's Day in remembering our sons and daughters, brothers and sister, husbands and wives who are so far away from home.

I will start collecting cards and letters on January 19. (Look for a box outside the Cashier's Office.) All correspondence will be mailed on February 1. There is no need to stamp any envelopes. If you wish to hear from anyone overseas, please put your return address on the envelope.

For more information, please stop by my office (BAY-129) or call 893-9107.

Singers in "MELODRAMA"

by Sudsy Tschiderer
Activities Advisor

The USF St. Pete Singers recently concluded its gala presentation of "Merry Christmas Melodrama. " Performing over 25 forty minute song-and-dance shows, the group provided holiday spirit around town in December.

Featuring an all-star cast, the vile villain Smudley Bullwhip (Jim Ferguson) and his shrewd accomplice Lucretia Blackstone (Pam Wevelcy) attempted to acquire the rightful inheritance of Miss Charity Bliss Sweetwater (Cynthia Holland). The impertinent, Quigley Goodman (Jerry Notaro/ Bob Powell), was aided in his efforts to rescue the lovely Miss Charity by Mortimer (Mike Moyer/ Bob Williams) and Humphrey (Shawn Powell/Mason Curran) Grumpolin, Birdie Peacoock (Donna Christensen) and her sisters Polly (Pat France) and Polly (Valerie Prosser/Sudsy Tschiderer) provided comic relief. Narrator Holly Christmas (Denise Miller) and Maid Marion (Dede Boggs/Dawn Powell) also lent comfort and support to the distressed heroine. Joy "Magic Fingers" Foley provided expert piano accompaniment for the shows.

The Singers comprise quite a collection of personalities and talents—and invite new members of the University community to participate. Rehearsals for the annual St. Patrick's Day show begin on Sunday, January 24 at 4:00 PM in Bayboro Hall, Room 130.

For further information, about the Singers, contact Sudsy Tschiderer (COQ-102), Nancy Teets (BAY-118), or Joy Foley (BAY-218).

Free Trees!

The Community Beautification Committee of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring its annual tree planting project in early February. Two types of saplings will be available: live oak and red cedar. Please ORDER yours today by contacting the Activities Office (COQ-102) or call 893-9596. Saplings may be PICKED UP on Friday, February 5 from 1:00-3:00 PM in COQ-102. Saplings must be ordered in advance.

Day Care Subsidy Program for Students

by Lynn Ellen Messere
Office of Student Activities

...and the GOOD NEWS is that USF St. Petersburg Student Government wants to help with part of your child care costs... You are eligible for five dollars per semester hour for which you are registered in any given semester. The only confusing part is that you must provide receipts totaling twice the amount of money you are requesting. (Example: 5 semester hours X $5.00=$25.00; therefore receipts must total $50.00.)

Here's how it works:

YOU
1. Go to BAY-115 and pick up a Day Care Subsidy packet;
2. Fill out the forms and attach a copy of your day care receipts (these must be for care provided for the semester for which you are requesting assistance and the care-giver must be licensed with the State of Florida);
3. Return the filled out forms and copies of the receipts to BAY-115;
4. Wait to hear (from this office) that your check has arrived.

WE
1. Check over the forms and take care of the necessary processing;
2. Contact vis phone or mail telling you that your check has arrived;
3. Arrange to give you your subsidy!

REMEMBER: The money is here for you!

If you have any questions, call Lynn Ellen Messere (BAY-115) at 8939128.
Horn and Fisher Retire From FIO

The Florida Institute of Oceanography (FlO) regretts to announce the retirement of two long-time employees, effective December 31, 1987. Cumulatively they have served the State University System for over 40 years.

Alma N. Horn, Administrative Assistant, has served under two directors and three acting directors during her employment at FIO. She has been with the State University System for 23 years.

Ruth V. Fisher, Administrative Secretary to the Assistant Director of FIO, has also worked for the State of Florida Outer Continental Shelf Representative for the last 15 years. She has been with the State University System for 18 years.

It is with regret that the FIO acknowledges the well-earned retirement of Mrs. Horn and Mrs. Fisher.

PANDA-MONIUM at Busch Gardens!

The Activities Office sells discount tickets to Busch Gardens in Tampa—where the giant pandas Ling Ling and Yong Yong are residing until March. The pandas are on loan from the Beijing Zoo in China.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON PANDAS

Giant pandas, beloved teddy-bear-like, black and white creatures to most U.S. citizens, desciognomen (large bears) to the Chinese and Ailuropoda melanoleuca to scientists, were first discovered by the western world in 1869.

Pere Armand David, a famous French Lazarist missionary and one of the most important naturalists and explorers in the 19th century, traveled to western China where, he was told by other missionaries, there were numerous interesting animals. It was that year that Pere David sighted a panda and brought specimens—skins, skulls, and bones—from China back to the Museum of Paris. The only other European museum to have panda specimens during the 19th century was the British Museum.

In 1929, brothers Kermit and Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. were the first Westerners to shoot a giant panda and present it to a museum. Eight years later, the first live giant panda arrived in the United States. Ruth Harkness, wife of William Harkness who had set out on an earlier expedition to bring a panda back to the United States, decided to carry out her husband’s mission. In 1937, she returned to San Francisco from China with a live baby panda named Su-Lin. Su-Lin was eventually turned over to the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago.

Pandas are now on display in permanent and temporary exhibits in zoos in the United States and the rest of the world. Because they are on the verge of extinction in China and now considered a rare species, the Chinese government and general public have taken an even greater interest in the observation and conservation of pandas. The Chinese government has established a loan program to help underwrite the expense of the panda conservation operation. Under this program, giant pandas that are felt unsuitable for breeding, due to either age or incompatibility with other animals, are circulated to other zoos around the world, so the public can view them, thus avoiding depleting their numbers in the natural environment.

To date, zoos in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Canada, San Diego, New York and soon Busch Gardens, an African-themed park and zoo in Tampa, will have participated in the conservation program by exhibiting giant pandas. The current panda population in the wild is estimated to be only around 700. There are three main factors contributing to the increasing rarity of giant pandas: habitat destruction by China’s 1 billion inhabitants, the die-off of certain bamboo species—a major food source for pandas, and deaths from snare traps often set for other animals.

The rapidly growing Chinese population is increasingly infringing more and more upon the pandas’ habitat, which is dense, wet, mountainous forests in an area on the eastern edge of the Himalayas near the Chinese-Tibetan border. Pandas are primarily found in the provinces of Sichuan, Shannen, and Gansu. In the summer, the panda is also known to frequent the Tibetan plateau in the province of Chinghiai.

While bamboo stems, shoots and flowers are the primary food source for pandas in the wild, they also eat grasses, carrion, birds, and small animals. When in captivity, pandas are usually fed a diet of bamboo, vegetables, fruit, and rice. In regard to their body shape and features, giant pandas most resemble bears. They have thick, white fur covering their head, back, and belly, and black fur covering their eyes, ears, shoulders, and all four legs and feet. The pandas’ five-inch tail is white. In addition to flexibility, one interesting feature of panda physiology is the sixth digit on their forepaws. This thumb-like wristbone, along with their powerful jaws and a thick-walled, splinter-proof esophagus, allows the animals to grasp and eat bamboo stalks.

Shy and solitary creatures, pandas are usually only together to mate, fight or rear their young. To help preserve the species, many efforts are being made to breed pandas in captivity through current conservation programs.

—Reprinted from FLASH, Florida Power’s Employee Newsletter.