



CLICK HERE TO SEE OUR WEEKLY SPECIALS

4750 Eastern Valley Rd. McCalla, AL 35111 205-230-0142
 104 River Square Plaza Hueytown, AL 35023 205-230-0259

Featured Chasing the Sun Events » PDF Archive About Contact / Advertising

Home Life Rockabye Elephant

Rockabye Elephant

Posted By Tammy Blue



- ♥
- f
- t
- g+
- +
- +

While getting ready to head to the ranch that fateful morning, my cell phone rang. It was Eric. "Want to go on an elephant job with me and Eddie today?" I couldn't say yes fast enough! I was ready for the location work, or so I thought.

I'd been volunteering at the exotic animal ranch in Santa Clarita, California for weeks since graduating from their intense school for exotic animal husbandry and training, and now the veteran trainers were actually asking me to work with them on a job. It is rare for a new graduate to be asked to participate. There's a lot of trust and skill needed for this type of work, and when the boys' club invites you in, you don't say no; not that I would have missed the chance for anything in the world.

We loaded Nellie, the 13 foot tall, 15,000 pound female African elephant onto the transport trailer, and were on route well before 10:00 a.m. Eddie has been Nellie's main trainer since she was rescued from Africa and always accompanied Nellie on jobs. Since Eric was co-owner, he worked with all of the 30+ animals on the ranch, but Nellie was our only elephant, and she actually loved to work.

While Eric slowly drove the trailer through the winding back roads of the valley, I could feel Nellie shifting her weight in the back. It was very common for elephants to do this, and Eric and Eddie chatted away with the radio playing. They didn't seem concerned, until we had to stop for construction in the middle of the narrow road. Three minutes felt like an eternity to sit and wait, especially since Nellie knew we were stopped. She thought it must be time to get out. She began rocking the trailer, almost as if she was trying to push us forward. Eric leaned out the window and stressed to the workers the necessity for us to get moving again quickly. Luckily, we were waved through and went on our way.

Search for:

View our Current Issue



View our Current Issue

Follow Us on Instagram



INSURANCE CLAIM DISPUTE? NEED AN ATTORNEY?
 Call Today For A Free Consultation

Property Damage, Estate Planning, Construction, Personal Injury

CALL TODAY FOR A FREE CONSULTATION!
205-208-7561

20 Years as an Experienced Insurance Claims Adjuster
 Practicing Law since 1993

HackneyLawFirm.com
 27th Street South, Suite B, Hoover, AL 35226

The Hackney Law Firm
 "The Policyholder's Lawyer"
 Atlanta Property Damage Lawyers

The representation made that the quality of the legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by others.

It took us only an hour to reach downtown. The job was a huge festival for the largest Hispanic retailer in the country. We were told to expect 17,000 people that day, and most of them would be children. Our job was to coordinate over 100 elephant rides an hour for 5 hours straight.

While Eric and Eddie set-up the 8-foot high platform and stairs, I stood guard outside Nellie's trailer as the crowd quickly gathered to try to peek inside. Nellie knew we were at the job, and really wanted to get out, so she was rocking the trailer back and forth furiously. I had to keep people at a safe distance to prevent them from being knocked out.

The plan was to give rides for 45 minutes, and to rest Nellie for 15 minutes after every hour. We had to have time to water, feed, and clean up after her. It appeared the elephant rides were the only source of entertainment that day for a very large group of very excitable children. We had a large area blocked off for the rides, Eddie "drove" Nellie, and Eric and I worked the platform. Security was provided to keep people from coming into the ride area and to serve somewhat as translators since no one spoke English.

Things started without a hitch, until I got into an argument with a lady who insisted that her newborn ride on the elephant. At least the word "no" translated across most languages, or so you would think. She kept insisting until a security guard finally translated to her that it wasn't safe for a 6 month old to sit on an elephant. Perhaps we should have shown her how Nellie could eat an entire watermelon in one bite, but I digress.

My job became making sure the children got safely up and down the steep stairs without falling, and Eric placed them on Nellie who wore a fitted saddle with a handle bar on one side for riders to hold onto. After doing this for what seemed like forever, Eric and I fell into a groove. I was passing kids up to him like a football, and it ran absolutely perfectly. Until it didn't.

People started throwing items into the ride area. Nellie will eat anything. It is easy for her to pick up even the smallest paper with her trunk, and no one, not even Eddie, can keep an elephant from doing what she wants to do. It's the equivalent of a 15,000 pound 4 year old throwing a tantrum. All three of us had about reached our limit. We were outside in the blistering California sun, standing on hot concrete. All of our energy went into watering and cooling down Nellie, and making sure she was comfortable. None of us had lunch or even a bottle of water. Finally, it was the last hour of the day, and we were going to start another round of rides. A different mother screamed at me for telling her that her baby couldn't ride the elephant. Nellie was growing impatient and walking much faster on the rides than what Eddie wanted. Eric finally said, "We're outta here". He was getting sick of the crowd not cooperating, and safety and the animals needs were always priority one.

We loaded her up and began the ride back to the ranch. Even when trying to back out with the trailer, people were jumping onto the truck to try and take a picture of her before we drove away. It was unlike anything I ever experienced.

I'd become quite accustomed to Nellie's moods, needs, and how to care for her over the months I spent training. What I wasn't prepared for was how people react toward animals on the jobs. I sat, silently fuming, in the truck on the way home. "Was it what you expected?" Eric asked me with an exhausted smile.

In disbelief I simply said, "Do you believe that? A baby on an elephant?"

"Welcome to the pro world grasshopper", Eddie replied laughing. Nellie started rocking back and forth in the trailer. I agreed with her: it was definitely time to go home.

Author: Tammy Blue

Share This Post On

Submit a Comment

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Name *



MASTERCRAFT BUILDERS
LARRY PENNINGTON
205.780.6710
205.369.6571
REMODELING • ROOM ADDITIONS
NEW HOMES



MASTERCRAFT BUILDERS
LARRY PENNINGTON
205.780.6710
205.369.6571
REMODELING • ROOM ADDITIONS
NEW HOMES

All Categories

- ▶ Chasing the Sun
- ▶ Entertainment
- ▶ Featured
- ▶ Food
- ▶ Health
- ▶ Interviews
- ▶ Life
- ▶ Local Celebrities
- ▶ Movies
- ▶ Music
- ▶ News
- ▶ Nightlife
- ▶ Recipes
- ▶ Restaurants
- ▶ Reviews
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Various