

Jumbo the Elephant

Jumbo the Elephant was a six-and-a-half ton African elephant who was 11½ feet tall. During the late 1800s, he lived in the London Zoological Gardens in England. At that time, Jumbo was the largest animal living in captivity anywhere in the world. The British were very proud of the gentle Jumbo. Many English children, including the young British princes and princesses, took rides on Jumbo's massive back. By 1881, however, officials at the zoo were worried that they would be unable to care for Jumbo because he was growing larger and stronger.

About that time, an American circus owner named P.T. Barnum offered to buy the elephant from the English for 2,000 pounds (\$30,000 in American money at the time). The zookeepers readily agreed, but their decision upset the British people, who hated to lose Jumbo. The Prince of Wales, who was heir to the British throne, publicly protested the sale, and a group filed a lawsuit to try and stop it. But nothing could persuade Barnum to abandon the sale. He knew the elephant would be a big hit with American circus-goers. Barnum knew he would make a lot of money from Jumbo because people in England donned clothing decorated with Jumbo's image to mourn his departure.

Barnum loaded Jumbo into a large boat and brought him across the Atlantic Ocean. On April 9, 1882, the boat docked in New York Harbor. From there, a group of spectators paraded with the giant elephant to Madison Square Garden, Jumbo's new home. People came in droves to see Jumbo. So many people came that it took Barnum only two weeks to earn back the \$30,000 that he had paid to buy Jumbo and to cover the costs of shipping him across the ocean.

Jumbo was a household name in America. His name was used to advertise various products, including tooth powder. He even was pressed into service to test the strength of the Brooklyn Bridge before it opened in 1883. Jumbo was killed in

