

## Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup> – Day 16<sup>th</sup>

07:15 a.m. – „We took our time getting up“. Cloudy but 73 F.

08:00 a.m. – Susie served breakfast in the front patio with a fire in the ceramic fireplace ... and coffeeeeeee ...



09:30 a.m. – the Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo.  
(<http://www.omahazoo.com>)

Ginny had already been waiting for us among a bunch of child visitors when we came.

Susie bought tickets and we hit the tour of animals. The first ones we saw were bronze ones, perfectly made an above life-size lion family. Their smooth-faced backs invited to sit up ...

First we headed to the Lied Jungle with the world's largest indoor rainforest and various types of jungle. Yes, we had never seen anything like that before (*again*).

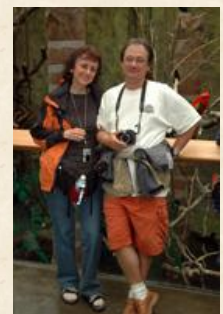
There was the more level configuration with trails leading over the rope bridge ... through short tunnels ... above even behind waterfalls ... above even along a river ... and that all we did in an unbelievable humid and heavy air. There were of course palm trees, liana and all imaginable tropical vegetation all kinds with blooms of various colors. And all of that was situated bellow the giant metal-glass cupola that was supported by the mighty concrete



but accurate nature-like trunk. But there were not only trees and vegetation, we could hear all jungle sounds and noise all around, including bubbling and gurgling of water streams and falls and mainly a lot singing of songbirds and parrots and shrieks and screams of crazy jumping and climbing monkeys.

Another kind of life we could see in the lowest level where there were tapirs strolling along the water and also swimming in it together with the great fish and also waterbirds. And a bit further there was a big aquarium with turtles and fish. The absolute jungle life.

*„The magnificent Lied Jungle is the world's largest indoor rainforest. Inside this 80-foot-tall, 1½-acre conservatory, more than 2,000 plants make the nearly 100 animal species (and human visitors) feel they're in a real jungle, one that is toured from both above and from the jungle floor. The Asian section includes small-clawed otters, gibbons, clouded leopards, and Malayan tapirs, some seen from a slippery swaying suspension bridge behind a waterfall. Africa includes lemurs, blue monkeys, and a pygmy hippo pool. South America has tapirs, otters, vampire bats, enormous Amazonian fish, macaws, and more monkeys'.*



After about one hour we left that magic of the tropicle jungle, withstood traps for tourists and headed for the IMAX cinema. All of us the five. Me and Hana for the first time in our lives.

It was the three-dimensional cinema, where they lend you a big glasses with polarized lenses and where they show stereophotographic movies that you are able to see thanks to glasses in the three-dimensional, life like way. It is so accurate that you feel like you are one part of the movie.

Our movie was about dinosaurs. Yes we were in the ZOO, so it suited. Only those animals were too big after all. ☺

After the IMAX Ginny said her good bye to us, she had to go to work. Us four continued the animal tour.

And what was the next place to visit in line ? *„Scott Aquarium, the best aquarium in any USA zoo, features a glass-fronted penguin habitat with real manmade snow, an impressively-large octopus tank, jellyfish, and a 70-foot- long glass tunnel surrounded by sharks.'* Yes, it was said in the ZOO brochure. And yes, it was the fantastic



spectacle. One of the penguins was really funny when it had a shower under the manmade snow falling down from above ... ☺



Wow ! Right next door we could see another kind of the glassed-in habitat as contrast to that cold, with mangroves, fish and ... alligators ! Our good guys gators.

And what amazing that glass tunnel was ! What an amount of fish of all colors and species we could see there ! Huge shoals of colorful small fish, ponderous turtles, majestic stingrays and ... wow ! Tigers among fish ... sharks ! It was pretty frightening to see them slowly swimming above our heads in full feather of its 12 feet.

About 1 p.m. – we left that magic water world and we had a short rest in the Durham's Tree Tops restaurant with coffee (*Pepsi*) and some sweets. We sat at the table right by the side of the metal-glass cupola of the Lied Jungle. We were looking down from the height of the tree tops. It was the casual a half hour break.

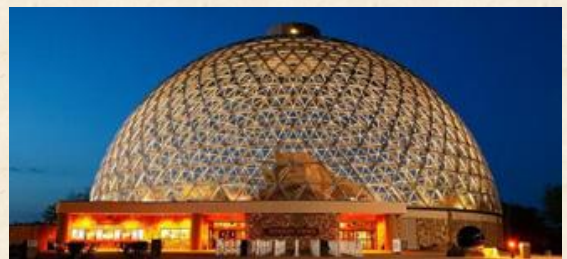
*Adjacent to the Lied Jungle is the Durham's TreeTops Restaurant, with seating capacity of over 300 people. Money to build the \$2.55 million restaurant was donated by Charles and Margre Durham and the Kiewit Foundations. Visitors can view the indoor jungle through 90 feet of floor-to-ceiling windows. The Durham's TreeTops Restaurant features cafeteria-style meals either hot off the grill or a cold deli sandwich, soft drinks, salads, snacks, desserts and more. Open for lunch daily.'*



Again farther ... „Let's go to the biggest dome in the ZOO !“, we entered the giant ferroconcrete-glass cupola of the Desert Dome.

*Another great climate-controlled exhibit is the Desert Dome, underneath the world's largest geodesic dome. Deserts of three continents are realistically recreated. Around a big red sand dune, Africa's Namib Desert hosts serval cats, meerkats, rock hyraxes, and many birds. After a cave filled with deadly snakes, visitors encounter a miniature version of Australia's Ayers Rock, with rock wallabies and various Aussie birds exhibited around it. Representing America's Sonoran Desert, a herd of peccary wild pigs with pumas behind them is a stunning sight. Hummingbird Canyon has many fast-flying hummers. A sloping habitat is a children's delight, with many desert cottontails and jackrabbits.*

*Under the deserts, Kingdoms of the Night is the world's largest and best nocturnal exhibit. Clever lighting keeps animals visible, while it's dark enough to feel you're in their nighttime world. In one section, over 2,400 stalactites hang from above, while thousands of fruit bats flutter behind a harp wire barrier. Other fascinating creatures include naked mole-rats, cat-like fossas, aardvarks, armadillos, and Japanese giant salamanders. While on the swamp habitat's boardwalk, visitors see beavers, bullfrogs, and alligators -- including a beautiful white alligator. An interesting glass-fronted exhibit mixes raccoons with small alligators.'*



Yes, again, it was breathtaking. We were speechless from amazement ...

From the Desert Dome we went out into the sunless but nicely warm Omaha afternoon. We strolled along outside runs of the big cats to the pavilion of gorillas and orangutans. We could see tigers, panthers, leopards but also even polar bears and grizzly bears as well as Malayan sun bears. The wonderful animals in the wonderful landscaping that was faithfully copying their nature habitats. Rocks, waterfalls, trees ... and actually all that was manmade. Incredible. Concrete, metal and the great human inventiveness ... hats off to them who made it. Really amazing !

*,The aging Cat Complex is the largest feline building in North America, with nine types of cats, including white Bengal tigers. Bear Canyon hosts four bear species in rocky grottoes.'*



From cats and bears we moved a bit further, to anthropoids. First we peeked down into the gorilla kingdom from above, from the upper sidewalk. Apes were lazy walking down, under our feet in a lawn.

Yes, it seemed safely, there was a handrail in the edge and there was more than the 30-foot-high and steep concrete wall, yes ... but ... but looking at those silver-black big

muscular bodies, the idea of the mighty gorilla running and climbing up the wall was creeping up on our minds ...

So we better went down the sidewalk to the Gorilla Valley entrance and came in. There we could see the gorillas in their habitat safe and sound through big windows with safety thick glass in them (*but one of them was burst* 😊).

And it was really something special to see to the Valley. The gorillas were really imposing and a general affinity between them and human beings was evident. Those their eyes ! Especially one moment stuck in my mind ... I was taking picture of one male during his slow walking around the window, when he stopped moving for a while, turned his head and faced me. There was an eye contact between us two for about ten seconds. He stared straight into my eyes. I could feel thousand years in his look. It was the really strange feeling, it was like our brains were connected for a second. So deep sense. What was it ? His eyes were not eyes of the animal, his look was questioning, searching, estimating ... understanding. Who from us two was behind the glass ... ?



Afterward me and Hana expressed that feeling of our affinity joining a bronze gorilla family in front of the pavilion. We climbed backs of the parents ... Dan took shots. 😊

*,Gorilla Valley and Orangutan Forest bring these popular apes within a few feet of their human visitors, especially from large bubble windows.'*

Yes, the Orangutan Forest was another ape habitat that we visited. There was a visible difference between those two species. The gorillas were slowly moving, they looked like to be quiet and cautious. The orangutans were always playing, jumping and climbing everywhere.

When we had our eyes feasted enough on those lively great apes, we went out again and took a sightseeing tour around outside habitats of antelopes, elks, deers, boars and other even-toed and odd-toed ungulates.

We also could see a lot of waterbirds, mainly beautifully colored flamingos, on our tour.

But at that time we had already leaden feet ... so we turned our steps toward the exit from the ZOO. Our eyes for the last time swept the Desert Dome and also the lion bronze family and in the next moment we already were getting in Toyota. We would never forget that visit to the Omaha's Henry Doorly ZOO, it was the wonderful and memorable experience. Yes, yes, we had never seen anything like that before. It was amazing, fabulous, fairytale. The best ZOO in the world for us. Big thanks to you, Zuzanka and Dan. Big thanks.

04:00 p.m. – finally meal ! 😊 Our friends gave us a lift to their favorite Italian restaurant of Olive Garden.

<http://www.olivegarden.com/locator/locati onSearchalt.asp>

Yes, Italian cuisine is our favorite too. Indeed. Anyway ... we do not have it so often back in the Czech Republic, there is no Italian restaurant in our town. Only



when Hana cooked her pizza (*but it was something special then. Delicious, scrumptious ... even if it is a bit different to those original ones*).

Olive Garden was the really neat, quiet and attractive restaurant of upper class. A waiter led us to our table and brought us the menu. Our stomachs called for any meal of the menu but we had to moderate our tastes and to choose only something. So I ordered *'Cheese Pizza with mashrooms'* for Hana and *'Lasagna Classico'* for me. Susie had (*I think*) *'Fettucine with meat balls'* and Dan *'Spaghetti'* with something non meaty.

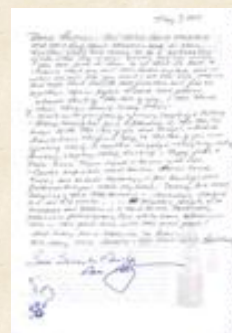


Something on the Italian cuisine ... I am everytime amazed, especially that goes for pastas ... they bring me a seemingly small portion of something good, what shows to be not only so tasty but also so, so filling that I can hardly manage to eat it up ... a miracle of the Italian cuisine.

So ... we loved our meals ! It was so, so yummy ! We enjoyed it our best. Without hasitation. We spent there really a pleasant one hour in a family ambiance and with the high professional crew. We can recommended it indeed.

**06:00 p.m.** – back at the Newberrys base where we had a nice evening with wine, talking and reading. I also gave our friends the 2006 journal: *'It was a dream'* about our common traveling around the Czech Republic. And Zuzanka immediately wrote in our copy her warm epilogue about both, the past 2006 and the present 2007 vacations of our four. It was very warmhearted and nice note.

**About 8 p.m.** Marcia came around. When she went out Susie talked something about her, about her work for the gallery that she managed to do a big amount of work but : *"Sometimes she drives Dan mad"*. ☺



We continued talking, I remembered not completely answered question of Dan's life : *"And what did you Dan do after you left the army ? I can remember you have mentioned something about hard drugs in the service ?"...* *"Yes, you see ... shortly after I got back from Viet Nam, I married Toni. I still did some drugs after I came out, but got off all drugs completely when me and Toni decided to start a family. Yes, I'm strong man who know what to do ... "*

Zuzanka backed us at that present time again and described the next day program. The last day for vacation time in Omaha : *"It would be relaxing and casual time the whole day when we will relish our time together"*.

**09:45 p.m** – we went to bed. It is true that after all that ZOO tour we were really dog-tired ☺.