

## The Santa Barbara Zoo

## ZOO-B-QUE

By **RICHARD AND AMANDA PAYATT**  
Special to CASA

**A**N INSTITUTION LIKE the Santa Barbara Zoo has dozens and dozens of functions every year. What is it that makes the Zoo-B-Que the one that the staff likes the best? The answer is a simple one. It includes families. The Zoo-B-Que is teeming with families with children. Saturday afternoons are fine, as it goes, but they can't compare with the Zoo-B-Que. Why? Because the animals are active.

After hours is the best time to see the animals at the zoo. Come dusk, the lions instinctively begin to search for prey. Sleeping time in the heat of the day is over. (Well, the heat of the day in glorious Santa Barbara, anyway.) The giraffes are ready for a final full feeding before settling down for the night. The gorillas are lumbering about, looking for a safe patch to hunker down in for the night. The parrots are making one last attempt to attract a mate, or stake to out their territory. The lemurs are hooting about and raising a ruckus as they leap from branch to branch with a zest that the visitor does not see during the afternoon. In short, the animals are behaving. But it is behaving as if they were in the wild, and not in the gentle safety of their zoological habitat.

The Zoo-B-Que opens the zoo to hundreds of lucky families for those precious evening hours. There, in the lingering sunset hours, children giggle at games and tumble in bounce houses. Parents sip beer and wine, and picnic on

barbequed chicken. Keepers come and give talks with the animals out of their cages. Tortoises placed in an environment that is different from their native sands, race like gleeful gazelles up the grassy slopes of the zoo lawns. African hornbills gaze serenely, with lordly mein, over the crowds that throng through the gates.

But best of all, is the fact that this is a big community picnic. Everybody at the zoo for the Zoo-B-Que is there for a picnic dinner, some music from the Dancing Drum company, and a fun time with their children. And more delightful even than that: couples without children are discovering that the Zoo-B-Que is an excellent opportunity to see the zoo's holdings at their most active. Don't miss out on next year's Zoo-B-Que.

The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 10am to 5pm. For more information call 962-5339 or visit [www.santabarbarazoo.org](http://www.santabarbarazoo.org).



Board member **Tom Luria** with staffer **Alissa Larreta**



Board Members: **Cyndee Howard**, **Glenn Miller**, and **Ginni Dreier**



Local artist **Mara Abboud** created a painting for the poster to celebrate Zoo-B-Que



**Putnee** the entertainer



Dancing Drum entertainers



**Mark Collier**, magician



**James Traverse**, the Animal Care Supervisor for Amphibians and Birds



Flamingo keeper **Miguel Carbajal**

