

ORCA STORIES

Amazing Killer Whale Tales

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Introduction

When I was a small boy I went on a field trip to a marine park in Holland called the “Dolfinarium”. I already knew about the existence of dolphins and I was looking forward to see these funny sea creatures in real life, at that time “Flipper” was a popular show in Holland.

We arrived at Harderwijk with a bus loaded full with children who had been singing all the way and guessing about our destination. We didn't know where we were going, because the teachers hardly ever told us the destination of our field trip, and so we got extra curious while seeing signs along the way telling us in what direction the bus was going.

I remember getting off the bus and looking at the entrance of the Dolfinarium feeling very excited. While the other kids were running around, shouting and playing, I stood there scanning the whole area. There was a beach, a stand where they were giving out free soda drinks as a trial for a new brand and the water which I thought was the sea at that time but in fact was just a lake.

When we entered the park a new and amazing world opened up to me. These were the animals I had seen on TV in so many documentaries that I used to watch, while sitting on the edge of my parents couch.

Walruses, rays and sea lions were all represented and some of them would do shows during the day.

A small basin that had rays and small sharks in it was surrounded by children and grown ups that would try their best to pet one of the animals swimming around in it.

When it was (finally) time to go to the dolphin show we all hurried to get the best seat in the round dome shaped building where we would soon be entertained by “Flipper” and his friends.

I was sitting at the right side of the pool where the animals would be performing and I kind of envied the people that were sitting in the middle and ground level.

But then I could see something moving in the corners of my eyes. I tilted my head a bit and stared at the back right pool which was close to where I was sitting.

Something black and white moved slowly around in the small basin, that was separated from the show pool with a metal gate.

I had no idea what this animal was, but it was much larger and had a different color to the dolphins I had seen on TV.

When it surfaced it would make a loud blow and then the creature would go back under water only to come back up again moments later and do the same again.

Before I could think of anything to do or ask to get informed about this animal, that had now got me more excited, the show started.

During the show the dolphins jumped, rolled and swam in any way possible. The people were cheering for them, but I couldn't help myself but to stare at that other dolphin-like mammal that was waiting for its turn to enter the show.

When it finally did, I felt mesmerized. This animal was huge compared to the "little" animals that it had joined.

Still she moved just as quickly and graciously as they did.

Then came the information I was looking for. A voice through the speakers started telling the audience about "Gudrun", a female orca.

So it was an “orca” that had my focus? What was an orca? What did this animal eat? How come she was so much bigger than the dolphins? The voice only had made me question more about this beautiful black and white animal.

And when the show was over I found myself staring at Gudrun for as long as possible until I had passed the small pool in which she was being held.

This for me was the first time I had seen a killer whale. And for it to be so up close was such a great experience that I can only imagine other people would have had that same experience too.

About 30 years later I watched a show on YouTube of the Dolfinarium back in the days when I was there as a small child. I could see Gudrun again, but the voice that guided the audience through the show sounded so lame and the information given was far from what I had learned about orcas after my first visit to the marine park.

This showed me how little mankind knew about these animals only 30 years earlier. The next and last time I would visit the Dolfinarium, Gudrun was long gone. She was taken to a SeaWorld park in the USA for their breeding program.