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"New Director Terms Zoo One Of The Nation's Best"

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Re I-40: On TV (Dec. 2), (Ch. 5 + Ch. 13?) Wilson
less noncommittal: said he didn't object to highway
if designed properly.

CP-25-20

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THE COMMERCIAL

Memphis, Tenn., Friday Morning, December 3, 1976

New Director Terms Zoo One Of The Nation's Best

By SHIRLEY DOWNING

Charles G. Wilson, 28-year-old director of the Little Rock Zoo, yesterday was named director of the Overton Park Zoo.

"I think that Memphis has in the Overton Park Zoo and aquarium one of the finest cultural institutions in the United States . . . and the world," Wilson said after the announcement was made at the Memphis Park Commission meeting in the Board of Education auditorium.

In a press conference shortly after the announcement, Wilson said he considers the Memphis Zoo 1 of the top 10 in the country and that he was pleased to have been named to the \$18,500 a year job.

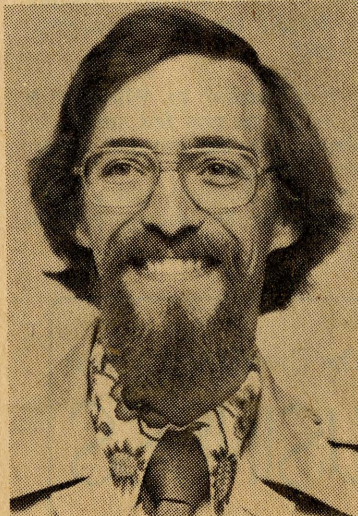
Wilson's selection for the job ends several months' search for a director. Dr. Joel Wallach resigned the position May 28 after staff members and zoo keepers and other workers asked for his resignation or dismissal. They charged he was insensitive to animal welfare and said personnel problems existed.

Wayne Carlisle, general curator, served as acting director but did not seek the job. He helped commission officials screen applicants and favored Wilson, officials said.

Wilson was flanked by zoo staff members during the press conference. He said he met with them yesterday afternoon and has dealt with some of them in the past in connection with zoo business.

"I think we'll have an excellent working relationship," he said. "The staff is one of the finest anywhere and I'm very proud to serve with them as director of this fine facility."

Park Commission Director Nat Baxter



Charles G. Wilson

said last month he had instructed commission and city officials searching for a new director to "look for more of a business manager and a PR (public relations) man than an animal man." He said the last three directors have been animal oriented.

He said last night he feels Wilson fills the requirements. He said zoo employees in Little Rock are under the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, as in Memphis. "Our investigations found that his employe relations as director were very good. From what we could find, he has a good rapport with the employes."

Officials, he said, also received many

newspaper clippings and advertising tracts regarding Wilson and his work and "the man is promotion minded." He said checks into Wilson also showed that he "has a good hold on business matters at the zoo and finally, he is a good animal director."

"We felt like we had found in this young man possibly all the qualities we had set forth. We believe of some 25 serious applicants and 4 finalists, that he was the best we could find at this time. The best of those people that applied for the job."

At the press conference, Wilson said he feels a good public relations program "is not a hit-or-miss" affair, but rather a cohesive effort to inform the public about zoos and why they exist.

The four basic philosophies of the zoo, he said, are conservation, research, education and recreation.

Wilson said he considers zoos to be "cultural institutions" and "we owe it to mankind to preserve and portray wildlife in a professional manner."

He said he is specialized in no particular area of zoo work other than being a zoo director.

He was asked about the proposed section of Interstate 40 through Overton Park and how he feels it would effect the zoo. He said there "are a lot of ifs here" but added that an interstate runs alongside the Little Rock zoo and because of proper landscaping, "95 per cent of zoo visitors don't realize it is there."

He would make no specific comments on any changes he plans to make, but said he would work closely with his staff during the winter to discuss long-range plans. He said he plans to begin his new job Dec. 27.

Wilson was accompanied by his wife, Susan, yesterday. She is a senior nursing student at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. The couple has no children.

The new director had been head of the Little Rock Zoo since April, 1975. Before that he had been at the Oklahoma City Zoo for three years, starting out as research assistant and moving up to zoological curator before leaving for Little Rock.

He received his bachelor of science degree from Oklahoma State University and lacks three semester hours having a master of science degree from the school.

Ed Carey, assistant director of the Little Rock Parks and Recreation Department, said Wilson "is young, aggressive and (a) very intelligent young man."

He said Wilson was well accepted by the city and the general public and "is very good with public relations and has done a tremendous job with that here."

Carey, who said Wilson was making about \$14,000 a year in Little Rock, said Wilson had established an educational program operated by volunteers and a Friends of the Zoo group during his tenure there.