

Shirley was born in 1948. At age five, she was captured from the wilds of Asia and purchased by a circus. She suffered much during this time including being a sole elephant for 22 of those years.

On July 6, 1999, Shirley became the fourth resident of The Elephant Sanctuary, joining Tarra, Jenny, and Barbara. She was brought in to the barn first then followed by the other elephants.

Carol Buckley, Executive Director of the Sanctuary at the time, described their amazing reunion in detail:

“Jenny came into the barn for the first time since Shirley’s arrival at around 7:00 p.m. There was an immediate urgency in Jenny’s behavior. She wanted to get close to Shirley who was divided by two stalls. Once Shirley was allowed into the adjacent stall the interaction between her and Jenny became quite intense. Jenny wanted to get into the stall with Shirley desperately. She became agitated, banging on the gate and trying to climb through and over.

After several minutes of touching and exploring each other, Shirley started to ROAR and I mean ROAR—Jenny joined in immediately. The interaction was dramatic, to say the least, with both elephants trying to climb in with each other and frantically touching each other through the bars. I have never experienced anything even close to this depth of emotion”.

They decided to remove the bars between the two stalls very cautiously. Elephants are over 6,000 lbs so this decision was not taken lightly. The elephants trumpeted and caressed all through the night and into the early morning.

The staff searched the records of the 2 elephants and could not find where they had ever been together. More research was needed. It was discovered that twenty five years before, when Jenny was first captured at age 5 months they were in the same circus and formed a bond that endured a lifetime.

The two elephants were inseparable in a relationship resembling one of a mother and daughter. During this time, Shirley also emerged as the matriarch of the “Founding Herd,” a leadership role reserved for the most respected and admired elephant in the group.

Visit The Elephant Sanctuary website: <https://www.elephants.com/>

Click below to see the reunion on utube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-77wtMxT3-M>