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From the Phoenix Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/phoenix/print-edition/2015/10/30/executive-inc-bert-castro-s-love-of-animals.html>

Executive Inc: Bert Castro's love of animals extends beyond his work at the Phoenix Zoo

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When Norberto "Bert" Castro was 7 years old, he went to the Tulsa Zoo for a birthday party.

While he was with his mother, he saw an elephant. Amazed by its power and intelligence, Castro told his mother he was determined to take care of the elephant someday.

He kept true to his word: 17 years later, he became the zookeeper at the same Oklahoma zoo and was assigned to Gunda, the same elephant he'd seen as a child. He said she still lives there today.

Castro has worked at six zoos during his 30-year career. His current job is president and CEO of the Phoenix Zoo.

Under his leadership, the Phoenix facility has opened new attractions such as Stingray Bay and the Komodo dragon exhibits.

Castro said he never saw himself becoming president of a zoo. He was studying to become a veterinarian before becoming a businessman.

"I don't think that I know that I wanted to be CEO," he said. "But I have this passionate love for animals, and I found myself moving away from being a keeper. I actually enjoy working with people, too."

Castro began his career as a zoo volunteer, cleaning rat and mice cages. After graduating college with a degree in zoo-logy, he applied to be a zookeeper.



JIM POULIN | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL
Bert Castro, president and CEO of the Phoenix Zoo, has built a career among the wild animals.

In addition to Phoenix and Tulsa, Castro has worked at zoos in Oklahoma City, San Antonio, New Orleans and Atlanta.

The most difficult part of his job is educating the public, he said.

“The struggle is to see the serious side,” he said.

Even though the Phoenix Zoo is seen as a family destination, Castro said he tries to teach visitors about the challenges animals face in environment and conservancy.

Castro’s entire life has revolved around zoos and animals. He even met his wife, Janice, on the job when she was a zoo- keeper.

When Castro isn’t running the zoo, he said he enjoys being near wildlife and nature.

“My wife and I love birding,” he said.

He said birdwatching was his wife’s hobby, and he came to appreciate the activity with her. His other favorite pastimes revolve around travel, whether it’s by motorcycle or by plane.

“I love motorcycles,” he said, listing the bikes he owns. “I love the open road.”

Castro also has flown around the world to locations such as the Galapagos Islands and Zim-bab-we, and has participated in four African safaris.

In Arizona, Castro said he has gained an appreciation for the desert.

“I love the weather. I love the Southwest,” he said.

He said he had planned to retire to the area anyway, so finding a position at the Phoenix Zoo was serendipitous.

Bert Castro

Title: President and CEO, Phoenix Zoo

Family: Wife, Janice; children, Cassandra, Kyle Caitlin and Kamryn

Hobbies: Birdwatching, travel, riding motorcycles

Travel destinations to date: Galapagos Islands, Africa

If you could be any animal: Any kind of eagle. They are able to just get up and go.

Cassidy Trowbridge
Editorial Intern
Phoenix Business Journal

